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# XLR8R

97  
MAY  
2006

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

## *Dabrye*

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steps out of the shadows.



Plus hip-hop innovators Gnarls Barkley, AG, The Streets, and People Under The Stairs





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# 97 Contents

- 16 Mr. Dead
- 18 Ed Banger Records
- 20 Caroline
- 24 Edu K
- 28 Border Crossing
- 31 Vybz Kartel
- 32 Prozac Turner
- 40 Dabrye**
- 46 Gnarl Barkley
- 50 AG
- 54 People Under The Stairs
- 58 The Streets
- 60 MSTRKRFT
- 64 Nobody
- 68 Alden Tyrell
- 70 Hesh Chic
- 77 Reviews
- 90 Music Columns
- 100 Lucky 13
- 102 In the Studio: Nicolay
- 104 Machines: Components
- 108 Vis-Ed: Deanna Templeton
- 112 TBC



Pancake Rodeo photo by Morgan Howland



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**ED'S RANT**  
**RAPPED TIGHT**



Mr. Dead photo by Dustin Ross (see page 16 for more)

**S**t. *Elsewhere*, the Gnarls Barkley debut, and *Two/Three*, Dabrye's latest, are two very, very different hip-hop records. *St. Elsewhere* is lush and loud and drenched in sweat. It's Danger Mouse at his most ornate, layering textures and voices into a swampy background upon which Cee-Lo's version of *Song of the South* unfolds—it's an emotional hurricane, a funhouse ride encompassing Delta blues, tent revivals, deep gospel, and Technicolor mood swings.

*Two/Three* is a much more "Northern" hip-hop record; an icy cool head-nodder that leaks its inner workings slowly and carefully. It's a love song to the future; it's soulful, even more so for not using soul loops or dusty artifacts dug from crates. It finds Michigan's Tadd Mullinix asserting that hip-hop is electronic music, while tearing up the true-school blueprint. And it does all this without having to prove itself every five seconds with the loudest kick, the craziest chipmunked Roberta Flack sample, or the most bombastic, bullet-hole-riddled MC.

I gush about these two records to let you know a bit more about artists we're covering in this issue, but also to belabor the point that there is a lot of life bubbling in the hip-hop landscape beneath the cookie-cutter gangsters and backpack syntax-pushers.

Throughout this magazine, you'll discover personalities pushing the genre forward from their own perspectives. Traveling to Los Angeles, we find People Under The Stairs keeping true to their vision of the old school (when they're not drinking beer and playing *Arkanoid* on old-school arcade uprights). With his third album, Birmingham, UK's The Streets asks himself how to transition from drunkenly fighting in chip shops and obsessing over Playstation scores to snorting coke with celebs and rocking Agnès B suits. Following personal strife, Brooklyn's AG and San Francisco's Prozac Turner pick up the pieces and kick out the jams, while New York's Jesse Serwer shares laughs and gore with horror movie makeup artist and rapper Mr. Dead.

Though we may seem out of breath, it's because we completed this issue while wilding out at SXSW and Miami. Hands were raised for off-the-wall Parisian trio TTC and the twerking MC Spank Rock; rewinds were called for drum & bass dons Andy C and DJ Die; piñatas bashed to Clipse, fights started to Towers of London, and minds blown by Houston's amazingly smooth Devin the Dude and a gracious Ghostface. While you pore over this issue, we'll be pressing the restart button and going at it again.

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-Vivian Host, Editor



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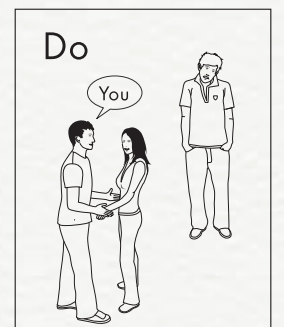
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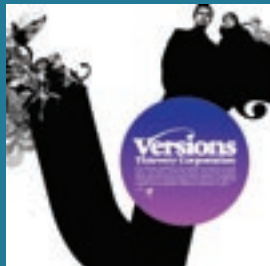
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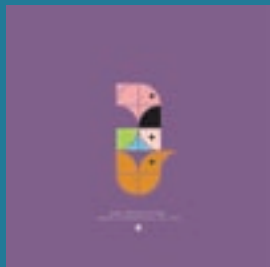
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**ON THE COVER:** Dabrye photographed by Jeremy Liebman

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In her spare time, Beryl roams the streets of San Francisco, rummaging through garbage and attentively watching natives wander to and fro. She shoots on a 35mm camera, observing city life and distilling beauty from cliché. She hopes to one day be admired for the true genius she is, but until then she waits patiently on the couch of the *XLR8R* art department, keeping [www.xlr8r.com](http://www.xlr8r.com)'s visual game tight (check her work on our new photoblog, Peepshow), and fulfilling her menial tasks with pride and honor.

[www.berylfine.com](http://www.berylfine.com)



### JOSIAH HUGHES

Hailing from the mighty trees of Vancouver, British Columbia, Josiah Hughes has been playing in bands and writing about music since his awkward pubescence. If he's not writing for *XLR8R*, he's either living it up as a staff writer for PrefixMag.com or rocking the PS2 with his wife. When he does leave the house, he plays shows with his band, Sticks ([www.myspace.com/wearesticks](http://www.myspace.com/wearesticks)) or just goes wherever guestlists will take him.



### JEREMY LIEBMAN

After studying film at the University of Texas at Austin, Jeremy Liebman moved to New York in 2002 and began focusing on still photography. He has shot for *Anthem*, *The Blow-Up*, *Animal*, *Neo2*, *AA*, *Sportswear International*, *New York Magazine*, *Intersection*, *Spin*, *Details*, *Vice*, and *Carl's Cars*. His commercial clients include Coach, Cloak, and Toyota. He is currently working on a contribution to a book project entitled *Live Evil*, published by IdN, which documents underground art, music, and fashion in New York, London, and Tokyo.

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### DANIEL SIWEK

Born in Jamaica, NY, Daniel "the Jah Lion" Siwek grew up on a steady diet of Casablanca Records and considers himself a walking *Pop-Up Video*. Responsible for the Boo Berry revival via his underground film *The Petition for Boo Berry*, Siwek has also sold his clothing line, Fun Dip Generation, to the likes of X-Large and Patricia Fields. A graduate of Cal Arts, he's shot music videos for the Voodoo Glow Skulls and DJ Wolf. His writing has been featured in *LA Weekly*, *Swindle*, and *Tikkun*.

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*5000 fast*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to [letters@xlr8r.com](mailto:letters@xlr8r.com) or send mail to XLR8R Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117.



### XL Rizzle Mail Bizzle

Hey XLR8R!

Thanks for finally givin' the Yay its due ["Tell Me When to Blow," April #96]. Hyphy is definitely still on. But what about Sacramento? We've been keepin' it live down here for years. Big ups anyway,

Mike in Sacramento, via the web

### Hey XLR8R

The Artist Tips section on Cobblestone Jazz was awesome [April #96]. Mat Jonson's production is amazing, and it's cool to see what he's using on his tracks. Talk about old-school synth shit! Please keep covering lots of tech stuff for your gear head contingent.

James in Berkeley, via the web

### MIDI-Not So Simple?

I have been a long-standing fan of your magazine and am saddened to contact you regarding a statement in your last issue ["MIDI Made Simple," April #96]. "Yet unlike Behringer, they don't need to reverse engineer anything to do it." This comment is completely misleading and false. In context, all of BEHRINGER's controllers are totally innovative and have a completely unique design. I understand some people believe this kind of slander, but when you get to the facts, it is untrue. We have hundreds of innovative products designed uniquely by the BEHRINGER R&D department, many of which use exclusive patents of our technologies. I will always continue to be a fan of your great magazine, but please separate out the hearsay from the truth, so we can all just have some fun making music. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Derrick Davis

Corporate Communications Manager, BEHRINGER USA Inc.

**CORRECTIONS** In #96's Audiofile on Belong, we mistakenly identified Jason "Turk" Dietrich as Jason Mark. XLR8R regrets the error. In #96, "Tell Me When to Blow" was credited to Ross Viator, who usually operates as Ross Hogg. In #96, we stated that the band 8-bit is from Sacramento; they are from L.A.



## XLR8R'S "SUMMER SNEAKR8R" CONTEST

Win up to three pair of fresh kicks from Karmaloop.com and a CD from Border Crossing.

Summer's finally upon us. Is it hot in your part of this fine, fine land? Well, if the air's still got a chill, allow us to heat it up with eight pair of hot new kicks from our friends at Karmaloop.com. **Karmaloop** is the hottest online streetwear outlet around, purveying goods from more than 80 clothing labels and bringing you limited-edition gear, accessories, and toys from all over the planet. It's more than just a store, really; Karmaloop.com is like an online community of style, and now they're doling out their good taste and great kicks from Reebok, Puma, Adidas, Creative Recreation, New Balance, Triple Five Soul, and Alife for your pleasure and comfort. What's more, Recall Records is also throwing in six copies of *Ominous* from UK hip-hop masters Border Crossing, featured in our Prefix section this issue.

So, you haven't got enough shoes blocking your doorway already? Why the hell do you need three more pair of sneakers in your closet? Send us a postcard or email letters@xlr8r.com (including your shoe size) telling us why you deserve them and maybe—just maybe—we'll send 'em your way.

Shoe prizes will be allocated based on available stock. Prize may not be exact model shown here.

**ONE GRAND-PRIZE WINNER** of the Summer SneakR8R Contest will snag three pair of his or her choice limited-edition sneakers and a copy of Border Crossing's *Ominous*.

**FIVE RUNNERS-UP** will grab one pair of kicks and a copy of *Ominous*.

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Entries must be received by July 17, 2006. Send your answers to the Summer SneakR8R Contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email [contest@xlr8r.com](mailto:contest@xlr8r.com) with "Summer SneakR8R Contest" in the subject line.



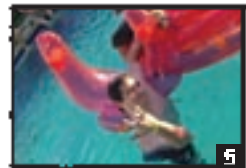
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## BJ "BITTER" BASTARD'S CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



**3. GROUPIE LOVE** Here we see Ghostly Intl./Spectral Sound DJ Ryan Elliott being cornered by a groupie during the Ghostly SXSW party at Austin's Plush. Thankfully you can't see the collagen-enhanced fish lips of this 40-something Barbie, but we'll just tell you that this picture was taken moments after she told Elliott that she wanted to fuck him, and moments before Matthew Dear asked where he could get some of the obviously very good Ecstasy she was on.

**4. AHQY MATEY** Although pirates are not known for being sensitive, they do need to have a little heart-to-heart now and again. This one was sparked up during Ursula 1000's breakbeat set at the *RE:UP/Nublu* party in Miami. (Notice how the one on the right appears to have a Baby Bjorn strapped to his back.)

**5. WATERSPORTS** There are lots of pools in Miami (and lots of them with no people in them, because no one wants to mess up their elaborately gelled and blow-dried hair). If you do take a dip, make sure you choose the right accessory, like this pink, dildo-shaped floaty.

**6. FAKE PUNKS** You see a lot of versions of the punk rock look at SXSW, but some people get it all wrong. Despite being from the same country that birthed The Sex Pistols and The Buzzcocks, the bass player from Towers of London has no clue that there is nothing renegade about badly straightened hair and a t-shirt elaborately lettered in Sharpie ink.

**7. LIP SERVICE** It is important to keep your lips hydrated and kissable in Miami because you never know who you will need to make out with. Some drum & bass producers are tweaking this concept by wearing bracelets with lip gloss dispensers—a Dior model is shown here on John B.

**8. PIMP CUPS UP** In Miami, you can drink whatever you want, wherever you want. On Ocean Drive, we spotted these dudes rolling for blocks with their doors open carrying the world's largest margarita glass, no doubt stolen from a TGI Friday's in Baton Rouge.

**9. SLEEPING** The object of attending festivals is to stay up as long as possible and go to as many parties as you can. But sometimes the drugs and drinks run out or don't work; then you pass out on the spot and just hope no one pees on your face.

**10. SMOKING THAT GREEN** We were in front of some pizza joint in Austin at 3 a.m. when we ran into these leprechauns, who were named Green Dick and Green Balls. Some people take St. Patrick's Day way too far.

March was a big month for BJ "Bitter" Bastard; first tackling BBQ, dusty trails, and difficult guestlists at Austin, Texas' SXSW, then getting all raved out at M3/WMC in Miami, Florida. Along the way, Bastard met lots of funny characters and witnessed mucho scandal. Here are a few highlights from Bastard's travels.

**1. THINK PINK** Mary Kay reps are no longer only middle-class white ladies who live in tract houses. They've now added a hip-hop division, so all the thug misses can get their skin right. We found this squad outside the WMC Stones Throw party and tried to get some Diplomats promos off them, but all they wanted to lace us with was Embrace Harmony Sheer Fragrance Mist and Rosemary Mint Foot Fizzies.

**2. PUSSY MAGNET** When you try to hook up with a girl, sometimes it's totally unclear what base she wants to go to. Are you allowed to put a hand down her pants? Is she going to let you hit a home run? Why not clear up the confusion and wear your intentions on the back of your t-shirt, like this classy rollerblader. P.S.: The "s" letters in "pussy" should always be dollar signs.





# MR. DEAD

A Brooklyn MC who isn't afraid to go off the deep end.

Words Jesse Serwer Photo Dustin Ross Special Effects Make-up Mr. Dead & Le'voría Doman

If MF Doom is hip-hop's vaudeville villain then horror/B-movie makeup artist and MC Mr. Dead is rap music's Vincent Price—or maybe its Peter Sellers.

Best known for his absurd cameos on Prince Paul's many side projects, Dead is a man of many different faces. There's Creeqo Valencio, a deranged choreographer in pink leg warmers who hijacks Prince Paul's MTV *Diary* and Jean Grae's "The Jam" video; Johnny Massengill, the "vaginal crooner" who just wants to keep your pussy clean; and Pimp Daddy Shrimp, an old hustler with a sweet spot for seafood. And don't forget about Peter O'Tool, frontman for over-the-hill soul survivors The Dix, or Manfred Winters, the well-heeled Handsome Boy Modeling School "instructor."

Dead was formerly one half of horrorcore duo Metabolics, which released its debut album *The M-Virus* on WordSound Recordings in 1998. Following the departure of partner Big Pat, he kept the Metabolics name and released what was essentially his first solo album (though Pat appeared on a handful of tracks), 2001's *Vol. 2: Dawn of the Dead*.

*MV3: Dynamic Tension*, Dead's first proper solo release, is a chaotic tour of the Brooklyn native's many personas. There's the apocalyptic imagery of "Burial Ground," the straight-up battle rap of "Hostyle Takeover," and the positive messages on "Love One's Self." Johnny Massengill and Pimp Daddy Shrimp appear, contributing the hilarious "Sweet Lady" and "Return of the Pimp Daddy Shrimp," respectively.

"Besides the strange hairdos, the things all those characters have in common is they're off-the-top," Dead explains, arriving for an interview at Brooklyn's Broadway Junction subway station with his 11-year-old son "Little Dead" in tow.

"Everything I do is very not planned and very sporadic."

Dead, who landed his first movie job designing creatures for the Troma Pictures flick *Sgt. Kabukiman NYPD* back in 1991, is also finalizing plans to direct his own horror film, *Four Sides*, with frequent collaborator Ryan Monihan (who directed the "Dynamic Tension" video).

"[The movie is] about this single woman trying to overcome tribulations and a tenant in the basement of her new apartment building, played by me, who has four sides and all four are sick," Dead says. "Rufus and Becky—me and my wife, Nakir—are the comic relief. Rufus is an older, weed-smoking type of guy with greasy, slicked-back hair and Becky is a Mary J. Blige fan who always has a fur coat and shades on even when she's cooking."

Dead's next two musical releases also appear headed further towards the deep end: *Son of Blowfly*, the story of a fatherless rapper who finds out his dad is none other than the X-rated funk legend, will follow *Tender Titties Vol. 2*, a full EP from Johnny Massengill.

"I've been blessed with the ability to multitask," Dead says. "So I'm open to all venues of entertainment."

*MV3: Dynamic Tension* is out now on Raptivism Records. [www.raptivism.com](http://www.raptivism.com).

# BANG! BANG!

Getting the party started with Paris' Ed Banger Records.

If you found yourself at an electro-house club at any point in 2005, you were probably pumping your fist in the air to Justice and Simian's "Never Be Alone." But this shiny, Atari-basslined anthem isn't the only weapon in the arsenal of Ed Banger, the Parisian label started in 2003 by Daft Punk manager Pedro Winter. Lurking inside brightly colored record sleeves is everything you need to rock your party, from Mr. Flash's updated electro-disco to Busy P's mashed-up arcade techno to blinging bass music made by French hip-hop heads. "I don't do minimal house or big-room pumping house," explains Winter. "I don't do boring instrumental hip-hop or fake crunk joints. All the artists have nothing in common here. This is the point!" Meet five Bangers that make it happen. *Vivian Host*  
www.edbangerrecords.com, www.headbangers.tv



### SEBASTIAN

A somewhat reticent book-worm, Sebastian would rather rave than talk to us. Fair enough. The 24-year-old former Prince fan makes club bangers that apply hip-hop breaks and flossy attitude to the techno dancefloor. Look out for a maxi-single from him soon.

**Uffie on Sebastian:** "This sweetie is great and crazy, as well as making some kick-ass music faster than anyone!"



### JUSTICE

Justice's Xavier de Rosnay and Gaspard Augé have popped out dozens of dope remixes for the likes of Franz Ferdinand, Soulwax, and Britney Spears (whom they mention to impress high school girls). Their world-wide DJ dates are fueled by "dry dark rhum, Spanish wine, and a secret beverage called Elixir Toxic," which is made from "gin, pepper, Tabasco, and other weird things."

**Sebastian on Justice:** "I could describe them, but why would I?"



### SO-ME

When 26-year-old graphic designer So-Me isn't doodling tattooed bikers and blood-red fingernails, he enjoys "language games, cute faces, and chord progressions." He also likes Kevin Smith movies and skateboarding, and rocks vector files and hand-styles with equal dexterity.

**Pedro Winter on So-Me:** "So-Me is the hands of Ed Banger; I am the ears. I attach as much importance to our record covers as the sound we put out."



### PEDRO WINTER

Ed Banger was conceived when Winter met the Justice boys at "a cheese party." "We went to Gaspard's bedroom and listened to some of their beats and I fell in love," he says. This former skateboarder and college dropout also possesses an outré fashion sense. "I like colored clothes, fluo shit!" he confesses. "I'm not into gothic fashion."

**So-Me on Pedro Winter:** "The Björn Borg of impresarios, with a strong taste in glossy sneakers."

### UFFIE

On her first single "Ready To Uff" this self-proclaimed "damn crazy brat" busts out the gate with free-style-influenced flows while DJ Feadz gets busy beneath her with a perfect mix of old school and new school sounds. Originally from Miami, 18-year-old Uffie spent half of her childhood in the British part of Hong Kong (which explains her frequent accent changes); she likes Missy Elliott, Ludacris, and Young Jeezy.

**Justice on Uffie:** "Get ready for the spank."



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★★★★ Scratch & Paste Magazine

"Maybe the finest record of his illustrious career" - XLR8R

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CAROLINE

### A Japanese vocalist earns a degree in dream pop.

Words Fred Miketa Illustration Fette

A fascinating voice has ascended from the bustling musical circuitry of Japan: Caroline. With dreamy vocals and captivating programming—somewhere between the melancholic charm of The Cranes' Ali Shaw and the innocently sensual minimalism of the Ghostly International roster—24-year-old Caroline Lufkin is staking a unique place for herself in a pop-ambient sphere already congested with Björk and Tujiko Noriko imposters.

As Lufkin explains, it's been quite a journey to the release of her debut long-player *Murmurs*, on Brooklyn's Temporary Residence (the home of epic and densely powerful instrumental bands Mono and Explosions in the Sky). After moving to Boston from

Japan at age 18, Caroline enrolled in the esteemed Berklee College of Music to study songwriting as a vocal principle. Though analyzing a variety of music under the guidance of professors certainly aided this ambitious pop gem, it didn't define her style. "I wouldn't say that the songwriting department [at Berklee] helped me, but the harmony department did," giggles Caroline. "It was just good listening to other people and being inspired by [them]."

Upon graduating, it wasn't all glory for the motivated vocalist. Seeing potential in Japan for her music, Caroline migrated back to Tokyo, hoping to produce an album that captured her essence. Unfortunately, the Japanese market wasn't quite ready for her. "Basically, my old management took me around to a lot of record labels and they all said 'Yes,' but in the middle of recording my album, it wasn't going the way I wanted. So I just kind of quit," says Lufkin. "Everyone was really nice and supportive of the record, but they already had an image of me in mind and I didn't want that."

Instead of engulfing herself in J-pop, Caroline moved to Los Angeles and recorded the synth-saturated single "Where's My Love," instantly forming a relationship with Temporary Residence. "I just emailed them and asked if I could send my demo. I guess I was lucky because they liked my songs; a few days later they were like, 'We're gonna sign you,'" she recalls.

Excited by the whirlwind of *Murmurs* and planning an extensive tour in the fall, this diligent songstress refuses to compromise her musical vision. "I want to stay away from the jingles, even if it's a quick way to make money," she says. "I just want to concentrate on my music."

*Murmurs* (Temporary Residence) is out now. [www.temporaryresidence.com](http://www.temporaryresidence.com)



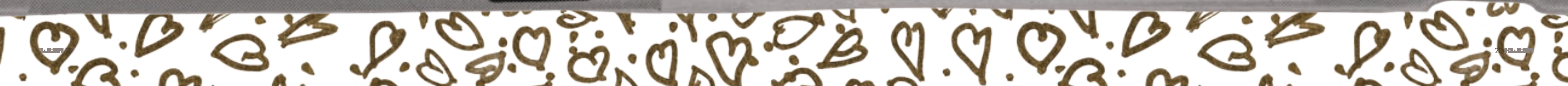
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## VEGAS SAVES US

Twice a year *XLR8R* peeps the *MAGIC*, *Project*, and *Pool* tradeshow in Las Vegas to see what's in the works for our favorite fashion companies. Here's some of what we saw coming for summer and fall 2006.  
[www.magiconline.com](http://www.magiconline.com), [www.pooltradeshow.com](http://www.pooltradeshow.com), [www.projectshow.com](http://www.projectshow.com)

1. Tight is alright: men's underwear by American Apparel
2. Onitsuka Tiger with the shiny stripes
3. Converse... so clean!
4. Dogg Pony Artist Series collab with DC Shoes
5. Seattle startup Edoc Laundry
6. Elwood came with the cords
7. Etnies Plus with the phat velcro
8. Jeremy Fish hats for Fifty24SF
9. Feeling the Fila topsiders
10. Fresh Jive camo peacoat
11. High tops from Keep
12. New Era brought a bus equipped with movie theater, bar, and soundsystem (and they showed some hats).
13. Dead bird hoodie from No Star
14. Obey wallets
15. Paul Frank handbags
16. PF Flyers Tyvek kicks
17. Puma does reptile print
18. Reebok Pump, not '80s at all
19. From VP Records' Riddim Driven line
20. Subscript line had some serious embroidery
21. Hand-knit pullover from Syndrome
22. Triple Five Soul jacket, full of zippers and buttons for that tight seal
23. No reptiles were killed in the manufacturing of this Pony shoe.





EDU K

A Brazilian punk rocker has his sights set on shaking foreign ass.

Words Justin Hopper Photo Sebastian Mayer

The raunchy, distorted crunch of an electric guitar's power chords; the chest-convulsing thump of a speaker-wall of beats; a soccer mob chanting the booty-worship refrain "Vai, Popozuda!" (which translates roughly to "Shake that hot ass, girl!"). For the past four years, it's been hard to escape "Popozuda Rock 'n' Roll," Brazilian producer Edu K's anthemic mating of metallic guitars with Rio's bass-heavy *baile* funk. The song has appeared on Brazilian rock radio, *favela* funk compilations from Diplo and Essay Recordings, even European car commercials. Now, with a full-length album of rock- and reggaeton-inflected *baile* boomers, *Frenético* (Man Recordings), Edu K feels ready to take the sound of Brazil's ghettos to the world.

Edu K's musical career began far from the late-night funk dances of Rio's shantytowns, in the relatively sleepy town of Porto Alegre in Brazil's southeast. It was there, in the '80s, that Edu K and a few friends aligned with European New Wave and formed Defalla, the post-punk band Edu K fronted until 2000.

"Defalla was for the goth, English rock stuff originally," he says. "I was just a kid hangin' around in full makeup, dark clothes, and big, messed-up hair. Aside from us few, the city's youth was totally into *nativismo* [traditional Southern Brazilian folklore, music, and clothes], so it was totally 'style wars' here."

Defalla became one of Brazil's biggest homegrown punk acts, but all the while the ubiquitous beat of *baile* funk—the Miami bass-influenced party sound prevalent throughout the *favela*—was rumbling in the background. In the late '90s, as funk became more acceptable to the Brazilian mainstream, Edu K and Defalla fell for its slamming beats and simple, repetitive refrains. They came to believe *baile* was punk's true heir, a philosophy of funk that few share.

"There's a lot of prejudice when it comes to *baile* funk," says Edu K. "People say it's the music from the poor, and rock kids don't exactly dig the funk scene. [Defalla] was one of a [few] bands to make the bridge between punk and funk. 'Who says a rock band can play funk?' was the general attitude. Well, George Clinton did!"

On *Frenético*, Edu K takes his punk-*baile* sound a step further, incorporating elements of his early electronic interests (Kraftwerk and Giorgio Moroder, for instance) and current reggaeton sounds on an album to be released only *outside* Brazil. To Edu K, that's the ultimate goal: to make music based in Brazil, but with worldwide influences and appeal.

"Reggaeton, dancehall beats—they all groove a lot like traditional Brazilian folklore riddims," says Edu K of a connection that might lure Brazil's music out of its self-imposed samba/bossa pigeonhole. "That's the hook: the African-Jamaican-Brazilian connection! Brazil's a huge country, and it's been looking a little bit too much at its own bellybutton in past years, but that's all starting to change. We're on our way to being a part of the global village."

*Frenético* is out now on Man Recordings. [www.manrecordings.com](http://www.manrecordings.com)

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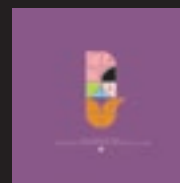
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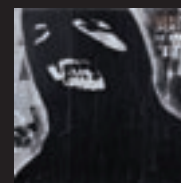
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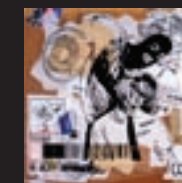
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## POINT BRAKE

*Pedal* is a love letter to NYC bike culture.

"They didn't exactly welcome me with open arms and I respect them for that," says 27-year-old photographer Peter Sutherland of the bike messengers that are the focal point of his book *Pedal* and its accompanying DVD (Powerhouse; paperback, \$29.95). The former—with introductions from *Tokion*'s Ken Miller, artist Swoon, and graff writer Zephyr—is comprised of quiet portraits from the otherwise rowdy 2005 World Cycle Courier Championships, showing messengers from around the world in rare moments of repose. The considerably more lively film, which premiered in 2001 at SXSW, finds Sutherland—on a skateboard—trailing bike messengers through the congested streets of NYC. It's a well-

rounded portrait of the lifestyle that includes quotes from boastful couriers, weather-beaten cops, and cranky taxi drivers, but its real charm is the way the footage makes love to the grit and grime of Manhattan.

"I'm often impressed by messengers as individuals—a lot of them are tough-as-nails, clever, creative, free-spirited people," says Sutherland, who is also behind the graffiti book *Autograf*. "And I think there is a lot of human interest stuff in the film and photos that appeals to people that aren't bikers. There are other elements to it that I hope people will dig: danger, style, street slang, beats, [and] gnarly bails." *Tyra Bangs*  
www.petersutherland.net, www.powerhousebooks.com

## HOME ON THE RANGE

Freerange Records' eclectic stable celebrates its 10-year anniversary.

Whether fish or fowl, non-vegetarians know that food tastes better uncaged. Apparently, Jamie Odell also knew this when he began gathering his cast of animals for the Freerange Records label 10 years ago. Starting with releases by his own Jimpster and Audiomontage aliases, Odell followed with singles and albums from Sweden's Stateless, Ohio's Hanna, and the UK's Trevor Loveys. Now the farm has a diverse population that includes Square One's dream-tech, Only Freak's retro house, Shur-I-Kan's intelligent future jazz, and Switch's punchy beats.

Odell explains that the London-based label has evolved from its eclectic downtempo- and jazz-influenced beginnings into more club-friendly, deep house sounds. But the last decade hasn't been all tasty eggs and fine meat; the liquidation of their main distributor, Ideal, nearly put them under, says Odell. "We, as well as the artists, lost a lot of money. So we re-focused on what we were trying to do and luckily pulled through it." Part of regrouping meant coping with the digital era, but Odell promises that Freerange's music is now available "on any one of the million or so download sites."

With fans from SF to Helsinki tuned in to the Freerange empire, Odell and Co. seem poised for another decade. But the question remains: Have the artists on the label actually visited a free-range farm? "Oh yes," Odell replies, "but we prefer the funny farm!" *Tomas Palermo*  
www.freerangerecords.co.uk



**Jimpster's Essential Freerange Releases:**  
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2. Audiomontage *Fun Kit* EP  
3. Only Freak "Can't Get Away from Your Love"



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Border Crossing: Seorais Graham (left) and Alex Angol

# BORDER CROSSING

Soul survivors take their name, and their hip-hop, to heart.

Words Ken Taylor

It's been nearly three years since Border Crossing's debut, *Ominous*, was released in the UK. After their first label, RG, went out of business back in 2004 and the duo—which now consists of DJ/producer Seorais (pronounced "shorus") Graham and turntablist Alex Angol—renegotiated their rights, French imprint Recall picked up the slack and gave *Ominous* its proper credit. The hip-hop collective has grown up a bit since then—in actuality, grown down (after last year's departure of engineer/producer Paul Mulvey)—but *Ominous* is just as close to their hearts as it ever was.

"A lot of [the album], to me, still sounds totally

fresh," explains Graham. "Our production and writing skills have developed over time, so we might feel that some of [*Ominous* is] naïve, but irrespective of that, the emotions and motive behind it means it still sounds fresh...I wouldn't say there's been a switch [in sound], but there's been a definite growth.

"It took us a long time to gain our confidence back," Graham says of Mulvey's absence. But they haven't missed a beat. Graham and Angol both took up the writing and production reins for their upcoming disc (slated for a late 2006 release), which features vocals from Ricky

Rankin, up-and-comer Vicky Virtue, and Five Deez' Fat Jon—a border crosser in his own right, with whom the duo shares a strong artistic connection. "There's been a kind of meeting of minds with Jon," says Graham. "There's definitely a sense of kindred spirits with people like Five Deez and even, I'd say, other artists that we admire like Little Brother."

There's an old soul element to *Ominous* that's undeniable, but hardly surprising—both current Border Crossing members came up through the ranks of the UK's hip-hop and soul club circuit. Angol was a DJ in Renegade Soundwave and Radical Crew. ("They were like our idols as kids," says Graham, also a veteran DJ.) They're also suckers for nostalgia, as evidenced by refrains like, "Original heads in the area/Let's take it back to '93/...the era of the true MC" on "Original Heads," where Rockwell's subdued rap anchors a bass-heavy groove complimented by a rhythmic, razor-sharp hi-hat.

One senses the duo could take things back even further, to the days when London's punk and reggae scenes crossed to create one of Britain's most politically interesting times for music. "That spirit never died," exclaims Angol. "If you look at West London now, you see we're doing an album and the guy above us is working on an Aswad album at the same time."

*Ominous* is out now on Recall Records. [www.bordercrossing.co.uk](http://www.bordercrossing.co.uk), [www.recallrecords.com](http://www.recallrecords.com)

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- 4/16-Milwaukee, WI @ Onopa Brewing Co.
- 4/18-Madison, WI @ The Annex
- 4/19-Minneapolis, MN @ Triple Rock
- 4/20-Des Moines, IA @ Vaudeville Mews
- 4/21-St. Louis, MO @ Blueberry Hill
- 4/22-Cleveland, OH @ Grog Shop
- 4/23-Buffalo, NY @ Soundlab
- 5/03-Seattle, WA @ Chop Suey
- 5/04-Portland, OR @ Berbati's Pan
- 5/05-Eugene, OR @ WOW Hall
- 5/06-San Francisco, CA @ The Independent
- 5/08-Los Angeles, CA @ Echo
- 5/09-San Diego, CA @ Casbah
- 5/10-Tempe, AZ @ The Clubhouse
- 5/12-Denton, TX @ Halley's
- 5/13-Austin, TX @ Emo's
- 5/14-Houston, TX @ Walters on Washington
- 5/15-Baton Rouge, LA @ Spanish Moon
- 5/24-Northampton, MA @ Pearl Street
- 5/25-Cambridge, MA @ Middle East
- 5/26-New York, NY @ Bowery Ballroom
- 5/27-Brooklyn, NY @ South Paw
- 5/28-Philadelphia, PA @ First Unitarian Church
- 5/29-Charlottesville, VA @ Satellite Ballroom
- 5/30-Asheville, NC @ Orange Peel
- 5/31-Atlanta, GA @ Drunken Unicorn
- 6/01-Mt. Pleasant @ Village Tavern
- 6/02-Chapel Hill, NC @ Local 506
- 6/03-Baltimore, MD @ Sonar

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Pictured: Will Sweeney Metal Storm teapot (\$88); Alife, Kamtang, and Logan Hicks messenger bags (\$220); Kiyoshi Kuroda and Keiichi Tanaami cosmetics pouches (\$60)

**HOT PROPERTY**  
Medicom's Fabrick line offers a little something for your lifestyle.

Japanese company Medicom is already the ish in the designer toy world, producing the Kubrick and Bearbrick figures as well as premium plastics for the likes of Comme Des Garçons, A Bathing Ape, and Maharishi. Their attention to detail serves them well in the second season of their lifestyle line, Fabrick. This time around, six designers—including New York stalwarts Alife, L.A. stencil artist Logan Hicks, and Tokyo's Kiyoshi Kuroda and Kelichi Tanaami—created custom

fabrics that were turned into 27 products, ranging from the necessary (wallets and messenger bags) to the esoteric (toilet paper covers and dog collars). Silas' Will Sweeney also reprises last season's popular robot war design on fine china—a must-have when James Lavelle comes to dinner. *Tjra Bangs*  
Fabrick products are available at Giant Robot stores and I Heart (NYC). [www.medicomtoy.co.jp](http://www.medicomtoy.co.jp)



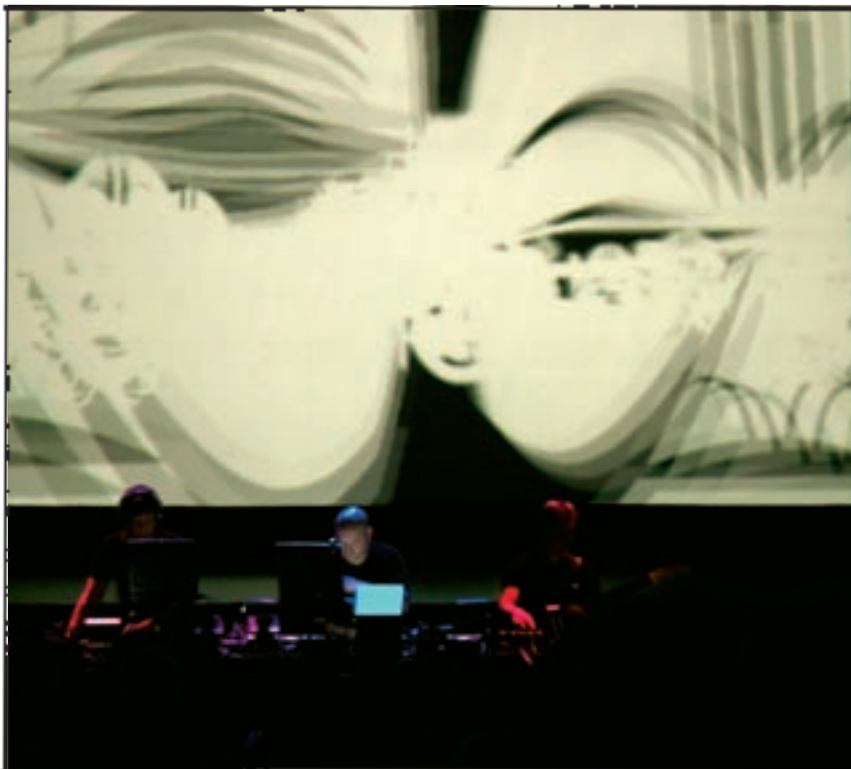
**WICKED VYBZ**

Jamaica's rapid-fire dancehall king shares his favorite US artists.

Every few years, some know-it-all music writer (ahem) makes the bold proclamation that dancehall is on the verge of blowing up in the States, but if I were you, I wouldn't hold my breath for the day that Ruth from Duluth bawls out "A here forward!" at her local sound-clash. On the other hand, the contra flux has flowed steadily for years now: Hip-hop is massively popular in Jamaica. According to Vybz Kartel, easily one of the island's biggest stars, "Jamaicans appreciate all genres of music—good music—and hip-hop is black urban music, so it's natural." Vybz is no stranger to hip-hop. In addition to being a fan of the music, he appeared alongside M.I.A. on Missy Elliot's "Bad Man" from her 2005 album *The Cookbook* and starred on the gunshot-laden "Double Down" with The Clipse that same year. With his inventive, rapid-fire delivery, ability to lyrically slay any and all comers, and, of course, his "up to di time" catchphrase, he's now ready to take on the task of "bringing the business of Vybz Kartel to America." To that end, he just released an album of his own, *JMT* (which stands for Jamaican Mean Time). We recently caught up with the jet-setting trendsetter via phone in Kingston, Jamaica, where he listed his top five rappers of all time. *Ross Hogg*  
*JMT* is out now on Greensleeves. [www.greensleeves.net](http://www.greensleeves.net). In the tradition of some of his favorite rappers, Vybz Kartel's latest mixtape, *So Much To Say*, is now available on a block near you.

**VYBZ KARTEL'S PERSONAL TOP FIVE U.S. RAPPERS**

- 1. Tupac Shakur:** "To me, Tupac is my number one. Not only for music but for his lifestyle and what he represents, how his music focused on the culture of black America. Who do you think got people here doin' all kinda tattoos and shit? And he sang "Dear Mama"... Jamaican DJs always have tribute songs to mama."
- 2. Notorious B.I.G.:** "*You know say a Biggie!* And you know his mom is from Jamaica."
- 3. Jay-Z:** "To me, Jay-Z is the man that really filled the gap for the East Coast after Biggie. He brought back the focus to New York."
- 4. 50 Cent:** "They call me 'the 50 Cent of Jamaica' sometimes. We have a lot in common lyrically. When I came out, I came out with five mixtapes; he did the same thing. And we both say things that people are scared to say."
- 5. Snoop Dogg:** "I like his style; it's somethin' different. He's always biggin' up the chronic, so you know he's popular here in Jamaica."



**JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH**

The habit-forming visuals of Britain's Addictive TV.

Pioneering digital rights organizations like Creative Commons and the Electronic Frontier Foundation are probably drooling over the possibilities that have opened up thanks to the work of audio/visual artists like Addictive TV. Light years beyond the gallery realm of masters like Bill Viola, this British collective's collages do more than question typical art concepts—they're on the vanguard of changing copyright laws and ideas of media ownership. But despite the bootlegged nature of their work, Addictive TV is finding exposure and acceptance in the most unlikely of places—the corporate world. Their brilliant clip, *Rapture Riders*—a mash-up of the videos for Blondie's "Rapture" and The Doors' "Riders on the Storm"—was directed exclusively for EMI.

Melding elements of graphic design with a sound designer's sensibility and a taste for eye-catching celluloid booty, these mixmasters and musicians create something otherworldly and all-encompassing from behind their Kraftwerk-style wall of synth- and video-modules. And don't think for a second that their art must remain locked away in a gallery; they've also crafted clips for club kings and queens like Matthew Dear, Derrick Carter, and Ellen Allien.

Addictive TV ups the ante at a time when the networks and large production companies are highly litigious. Yet the BBC has opened their archives to the stalwart TV terrorists, inviting them to judge an amateur video-mixing contest, *Superstar VJs*, and suggesting that, in the world of artistic ownership, things are about to change. *Ken Taylor*

Addictive TV performs this month at the San Francisco International Film Fest. [www.addictive.com](http://www.addictive.com), [www.siff.org](http://www.siff.org)

# PROZACK TURNER

Foreign Legion co-founder vacates the country, comes back hungry.

Words Max Herman

When Prozack Turner (of Bay Area hip-hop act Foreign Legion) left the States last year for a six-week retreat in Ireland, he wasn't exactly on a quest for rest and relaxation. He headed overseas with his rhyme book in hand, on a mission to record his new solo effort, *Bangathon*. "When not in the pubs, I was in the studio or on double-decker buses writing the album," recalls Prozack in his Bay Area twang. "So it was definitely a great place to get away and put things into perspective."

Prozack rightfully had a lot to contemplate. Following two independently released albums with Foreign Legion, this animated MC got signed by DreamWorks to record his solo debut. They even gave him a budget big enough to get first-class beatsmiths like The Alchemist, Pete Rock, and the late J Dilla in the studio. But not long after the completion of *Death, Taxes and Prozack*, DreamWorks got bought out, leaving the album stuck in the vaults.

Prozack never received the other 50 percent of the money he was owed, and wound up losing most of what he bought with his advance check—including his prized Cadillac Seville. "I never really gave a damn about money, just as long as my cell phone's on," says Prozack. "I did enjoy the splendors and I didn't work for a couple years and that was cool, but I could care less about the money. I would have done the record for free. Just the opportunity to get my thoughts out there and share it with the world is what being an artist is all about."

If there's one thing the DreamWorks situation taught this MC, it's that when it comes to business, you can't rely on anyone but yourself. Once Prozack returned from Ireland, he was so eager to get his new album out that he launched his own record label, Hungerstrike, to do so. "After going through being on a major label for a while and previously being on independent labels, it's like I have a college education in the music industry," Prozack explains. "It's like, 'Why don't I just do this all myself?' It's a lot of work, but it's very satisfying at the end of the day when you know that everything is getting done."

Prozack may no longer have the budget to record with hip-hop greats, but on *Bangathon*, he proves that the people he works with aren't nearly as important as the story he has to tell. Fellow independent artists will relish the story of his struggle within the record industry and his ultimate perseverance on the track "Hungry." Meanwhile, everyday guys will relate to Prozack's frustration with club-going women and their shifty behavior on "Club Girls." He may not have one target audience, but Prozack rarely fails to entertain with his vivid and brutally honest raps. "There's no bullshit in there," he says of his new album, but he could just as easily be describing himself.

*Bangathon* is available now on Hungerstrike/Pockets Linted.

www.prozackturner.com



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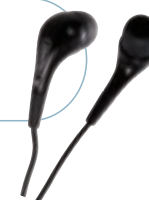


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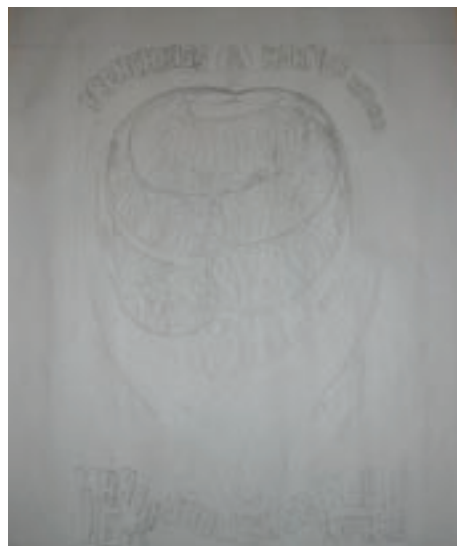
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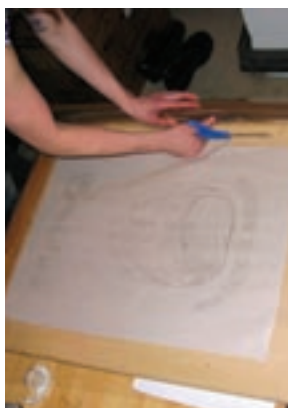
# ART SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Ever wanted to silkscreen your own poster?  
Brooklyn's Urban Inks shows you how.

For the past four years Sarah Mead and her boyfriend Reed Burgoyne have been creating unique concert posters, reminiscent of 1960s and '70s San Francisco, for groups like Von Iva, Magnolia Electric Company, and Tussle. Last July the screenprinters migrated from the heart of San Francisco's rock 'n' roll scene to Brooklyn, where, as Urban Inks, they've continued to cross-pollinate graphic design and music. While adjusting to New York's scorching summers and relentless winters, the couple is also learning to take recognition for their art in stride. In March, they created artwork for Les Savy Fav's SXSW show, and San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art will exhibit their posters this month. On a Monday evening in Lower Manhattan, over Pac-Man and Budweisers, Mead and Burgoyne presented a brief step-by-step guide for aspiring screenprinters. Megan Martin Photos by Sarah Mead  
Urban Inks will be showing their posters at SFMOMA, May-September, 2006.  
www.urbaninks.com



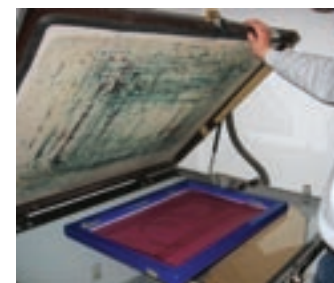
Print out your image on a transparency or hand-draw designs on transparencies using Rubylithe pens; they're available at art stores for about \$5.



You will need a roll of Rubylithe paper (about \$50 a roll). It blocks UV lights and will protect the part of the poster you want to fill in with color later. Once the image is exposed you can't go back. Use an X-acto knife to cut out the parts you do not want to be exposed on the screen. Think in layers (for color). You will need a new screen for every layer of color you apply to the poster, so cut the images accordingly.

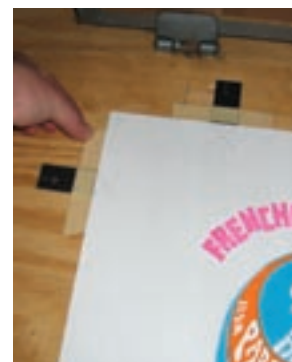


For posters, the recommended mesh count for the silk screen is around 137. Always clean the mesh with water, cleaning solution, and a scrub brush before using. After it dries, coat the mesh in a photo-sensitive emulsion. Spread it thinly and evenly with a squeegee or plastic spreader. Keep the screen away from direct light and let the emulsion dry.



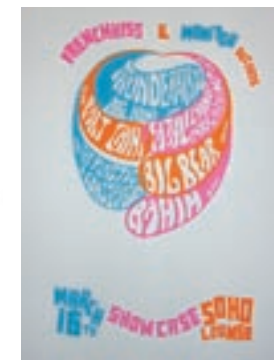
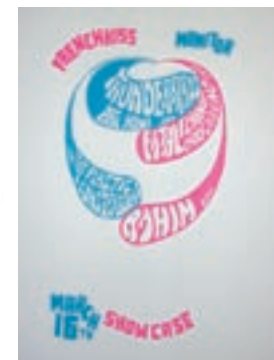
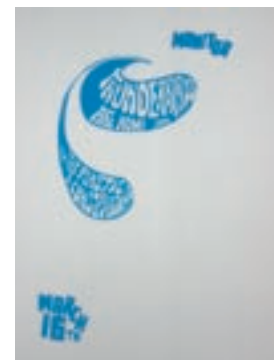
## 4. BURN YOUR IMAGE.

Once the emulsion dries, place your film positive on the screen. It will depend on which way your light source is coming from (above or below), but it always goes in this order: light source > film positive > silkscreen frame. Tape down your image on the silk screen on all four corners. To expose the image (without a fancy exposure unit) you can fit a piece of glass on top of the screen, secure it, and hang uncoated UV bulbs over the image. Make sure the screen is not touching anything. When the time is up, spray off the emulsion with water. Then let it dry completely. The image should harden to the screen if you timed it right. If all the emulsion washes off, you didn't burn it long enough. If you can't get the emulsion out, you burned too long. Practice makes perfect.



## 5. PRINT THE SCREEN.

Clamp the screen frame to a flat surface. Use tabs to make sure the image remains in the same place for different colors of ink. Lock up the frame in the hinges and use tape to cover parts of the screen that aren't covered in emulsion. Take the paper you will print on and tape down the image positive to it. Slide the paper underneath the screen and line it up underneath the screen where you want the color to be. After aligned, tape down tabs to ensure accurate placement. Remove the image positive from the poster and re-insert the blank paper underneath the screen, add colored ink to the top of the screen, and squeegee it across the screen. Let the ink dry. Change screens and repeat this process for each color.





**GOOD STUFF**  
A few of Delphi Collective's favorite things

San Francisco's Delphi Collective adds a humble touch of class to an over-hyped design world. In the past four years, Matt Irving's company (which encompasses a t-shirt line, an online portal, and a design house) has logged some serious coups, including the Nike Hunter Dunk, board graphics for Stereo, and a shoe and signature series of boards for Element. Irving is also involved in Umbrella Market, an online shop for one-of-a-kind items by Jeremy Fish, Mars-1, and others. This summer, look for a new line of Delphi tees, collaborative hats with Kangol, and art shows with Don Pendleton and Todd Francis. Right now, check Irving's must-haves. *Tyra Bangs*  
[www.delphicollective.com](http://www.delphicollective.com)

**1. OPTIMUS KEYBOARD (\$300-ISH)**

Leave it to the Russians to create something nobody else has thought of but everyone can use (like borscht). Word is that this keyboard (by Moscow's Art Lebedev Studio) will allow you to sync up to all major programs, and have key commands right at your fingertips. It'll be like a Gold's Gym for your hands!  
[www.artlebedev.com/portfolio/optimus](http://www.artlebedev.com/portfolio/optimus)

**2. JP HELMETS (\$59.95-\$115)**

I bought one of these helmets off eBay but have no real purpose for it. I don't own a scooter or a motorbike. Regardless, I'm wearing it as I write

these reviews. Safety first. If you own a Vespa, you should get one of these for your girlfriend. She'll love it and it'll make you feel like you're straight out of *Quadrophenia*.  
[www.jpohelmet.com](http://www.jpohelmet.com)

**3. CROWNARMER/STACKS CATASTROPHE T-SHIRT (\$35)**

I love this t-shirt, designed by my friends Michael and Laura Leon from Stacks for my other friend, Crownfarmer's Bob Kronbauer. Nothing is better than wearing a shirt that your friends designed, especially when you chose to pay full price for it because you like it so much.  
[www.crownfarmer.com](http://www.crownfarmer.com), [www.umbrellamarket.com](http://www.umbrellamarket.com)



**PUNTING HIGH AND LOW**

*The African Game* kicks around the cultural implications of football in the motherland.



In the textual and photographic narrative of Africa's passion for soccer, *The African Game* (Puma/Powerhouse; hardcover, \$50), Nigerian photographer/filmmaker Andrew Dosunmu and former *Fader* editor Knox Robinson pay homage to the sport that has made its mark across the continent. "For me, the most difficult thing about this project was roping together the whole experience of African football as it exists on the ground," says Robinson. "We very quickly had to get to ways of documenting the more nuanced aspects of the project—digging into all the various levels of stacked meaning in

African football and African life." *The African Game* contains more than sports photography; much of the imagery is of the game as it exists in the streets and on the faces of its fans. Says Dosunmu of the experience: "I have the awareness that my perception of Africa might clash with other people's, but I want to present the Africa I know, not the one some people presume." *Evan Shamoon*  
Proceeds from *The African Game* will benefit Grassroots Soccer, a non-profit organization that mobilizes the global soccer community in the fight against HIV/AIDS. [www.puma.com](http://www.puma.com)

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50 Cent, and Trina, and hosted by *Entourage's* Jeremy Piven. The clothing, designed by Blue and Undf'd's Jupiter Desphy, is available at [www.scion.com](http://www.scion.com). Electro-popsters Junior Boys are reportedly at work on their second album, to arrive in August on the Domino label. The sixth Bicycle Film Festival kicks off May 10 in New York and travels to Chicago, London, Sydney, and Tokyo (among other cities), before ending in Milan in December. Featured highlights include *M.A.S.H.*, a documentary about San Francisco fixed-gear culture, Peter Sutherland's *Pedal*, and *B.I.K.E.*, a film about renegade bike collective Black Label. The best indie rock shows in Brooklyn are the domain of Todd P; join his email list at [www.toddpnyc.com](http://www.toddpnyc.com). For nine magical days (April 21-29), the Thrilladelphia festival highlighted Philly's best indie rock bands, with performances by Grammar Debate!, Bitter Bitter Weeks, and Dragon City. More info at [www.thrilladelphia.com](http://www.thrilladelphia.com). Through May 30, London's Kemistry Gallery will be showing the text-heavy posters of graphic designers Experimental Jetset. !!! is working on a new album, which should be out by mid-fall with a single due in June. Rumor has it

the title will be *Kitty Cats are Known to Scratch*. On March 2, the U.S. Department of Justice opened an investigation into possible anti-competitive pricing of online music by the world's major music labels; Sony BMG, Vivendi Universal, and Warner Music were among those subpoenaed. Toy fiends are advised to pick up *Hi-Fructose*, a designer-vinyl zine curated by Annie Owens and Attaboy. Their third issue, out this summer, features art from Jim Woodring, Mark Ryden, and Brian McCarty. Peep it at [www.hifructose.com](http://www.hifructose.com). San Francisco is planning a new skatepark in the Potrero Hill district. Vote on it at [www.parks.sfgov.org](http://www.parks.sfgov.org). Dope new skateboards live at [www.heroinskateboarding.com](http://www.heroinskateboarding.com). Replace that busted cartridge or rare mixer part at online store [www.247DJspares.com](http://www.247DJspares.com).

1. Bicycle Film Festival 2005, S.F. showing (Darcy Holdorf); 2. Brian Alfred's *Help Me*; 3. Christian Fennesz; 4. Intonation Music Festival; 5. proposed San Francisco skate park.

## SPIN CYCLE

News and gossip from the music world

Christian Fennesz and Ryuichi Sakamoto are back in the studio working on a full-length follow-up to 2005's critically acclaimed EP, *Sala Santa Cecilia* (Touch); the new album will be out in autumn 2006. Throughout May, Coldcut will be touring the U.S. with indie-hoppers Blockhead and MC Juice Aleem to promote their latest album, *Sound Mirrors*. Through June 5, the last minute of each hour of the Panasonic screen in Times Square will be taken over by video artists Ara Peterson, Mark Titchner, and Brian Alfred, who deliver meditations on '60s psychedelia and propaganda. The program is sponsored by Creative Time; find out more at [www.creativetime.org](http://www.creativetime.org). Bon Harris, former co-frontman of '80s industrial dance band

Nitzer Ebb, is pushing a new project called *Maven*. Listen up at [www.mvnmusic.com](http://www.mvnmusic.com). June 27 will see the release of the long-awaited *Dr. Octagon* follow-up, *The Return of Dr. Octagon* (OCD International), once again featuring Kool Keith as the mad MC scientist, with production by three-man Berlin collective One Watt Sun, and contributions from DJ Dexter and Princess Superstar. Vice Recordings will curate Chicago's Intonation Music Festival, which occurs June 24-25 at Union Park; headliners will include Bloc Party and The Streets ([www.intonationmusicfest.com](http://www.intonationmusicfest.com)). On March 19, car company Scion launched a new sportswear collection, Release, with a celebrity golf tournament in Arizona featuring Mike Jones,



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# THE LAPTOP

Finally, DJs everywhere can use their PCs for something more than checking email. Pioneer's new DJS Professional DJ Software gives PC users control of two CDJ turntables, a DJM mixer and an EFX processor, complete with familiar features including cue/loop points, beat synchronization, and more. The display shows everything a professional DJ needs to see, including time, BPM, mixer controls, jog dial, hot cue buttons and more.

DJS software combines the key elements of Pioneer's professional digital CD decks and mixers with a host of innovative features including:

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- Create function for setting four "hot cues" or "hot loops"
- Assign basic functions to a particular key on the keyboard

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DEFINING THE INDUSTRY STANDARD

# *Cold Front*

Midwestern madman Dabrye gives hip-hop a dark, dystopian edge.

WORDS DANIEL SIWEK PHOTOS JEREMY LIEBMAN





*"I don't need to butter anything up."*

*A*nn Arbor is like a soundclash," says Michigan native Dabrye, while chiseling away at his veggie enchilada from inside San Loco, a Mexican joint on New York's Lower East Side. Taking some time off from his beloved job manning the counter at jazz and soul retail outpost Encore Recordings back in Ann Arbor, Tadd Mullinix is in New York to talk to *XLR8R* about his new Ghostly International release, *Two/Three*. But first he's content to wax poetic about the place he calls home; a city with so much green they call it "Tree Town."

"Being so close to Detroit, you've got that urban influence," he explains. "Now that music and culture are so global, you can get anything you want in Ann Arbor, yet it's still relaxed." The contrast between laidback Ann Arbor and hard-knock Detroit is a perfect foil for the music Mullinix makes as Dabrye (pronounced "dob-ree"). The Dabrye sound is rugged, technical, and sometimes banging—often closer to Timbaland than, say, El-P—but it does away with the aggression and in-your-face posturing one has come to expect from hip-hop. The music is unassuming and unpredictable, with lots of secret twists and turns—in short, it reflects Mullinix, who shows up to the interview looking like the avid skater he is, sporting an army green Etnies crew-neck sweater, a scruffy beard, and a laissez-faire hairstyle that makes him look much more approachable than his erstwhile shaved head.

#### A MAN OF MANY SIDES

Dabrye isn't Mullinix's only alter ego. Under his James T. Cotton guise, he delivers acid house and EBM that'll make you think you're playing *Tempest* on poppers; as SK-1, he makes mashed-up ragga-jungle; and, as Tadd Mullinix, he's made experimental electronic pieces that could teach Luigi Russolo a thing or two about Futurism. Then there's a character that he won't cop to: Charles Manier, the maker of spooky, darkwave-disco masterpieces (as heard on Ghostly's *Disco Nouveau* compilation). "I don't talk about him," he says with a mischievous grin. "He'll remain my special secret."

What all these aliases have in common—besides sharing a home on Ann Arbor's Ghostly and Spectral Sound imprints—is a sound that is at turns evil and humorous, one that's remarkably forward thinking but with an endearingly kitschy tinge. "The early '80s—especially 1981

*"My new beats are coming off pretty dark..almost ghetto tech."*



## Behind the Mask

Dabrye on artist WK Interact

"I snapped with his art, man. I wanted something that wasn't contrived graffiti references. I didn't want to do something that was way obvious. His style really fits the bill for what I'm trying to do; it's got a dirty industrial feel to it, but it's urban, and somewhere in the realm of graffiti, but it's sort of Man Ray-ish.

"He came through with the [cover] image [of the masked guy] on his own; it has a fight-the-system aesthetic to it. As Dabrye, I was pigeonholed [as] overly cerebral, and everyone was trying to intellectualize about my music, and I was like 'Fuck that!' I feel like that guy in the mask. People would ask me questions all the time like, 'How are you bridging electronic music with hip-hop?' And I'm like, 'Hip-hop is electronic music!' I'm like, 'You don't get it! Rrrrrggg! Stop thinking too much!' That's what WK Interact's art says to me."

and 1982—had a big influence on my sound palette," says Mullinix, who counts "Transformers, GoBots, Thundercats, and Silverhawks" among his favorite things.

Other favorites include decks (of both the turntable and skateboard variety), cheese, and weed, though he's "taking a break" from the latter. His heritage may account for his dairy cravings. "I'm almost one hundred percent French," Dabrye reveals, "so I'm eating bread, cheese, and wine on a daily basis." So serious is he about his Roquefort that he's close friends with cheesemonger (and DJ) Carlos Souffront, who works at famed Ann Arbor deli Zingerman's.

### GETTING A BAD RAP

Dabrye debuted in 2001 with *One/Three* (Ghostly), an album that was the perfect soundtrack to *Battlestar Galactica* Cyclons doing the bump and grind; it was followed up a year later with *Instrmntl*, for Prefuse 73's Eastern Developments label. He intended the music—which accentuated hard-edged electronic elements rather than the genre's traditional funk and soul sounds—to serve as a calling card for future vocal collaborations with MCs. The indie hip-hop community got the gist—with Dabrye earning nods from J Dilla and collaborating with Five Deez's Fat Jon—but critics and fans sometimes didn't. Dabrye's music was variously described as glitch-hop, click-hop, instrumental hip-hop or IDM, which he found more than annoying. "[Being labeled an IDM artist] bothered me a lot," he confesses. "I understood that it happened because of Ghostly's orientation and all that, but it didn't come off as I intended." Dabrye wanted his project to smell of industrially infected hip-hop. Instead, he laments, "It came off as another kind of electronic music."

Dabrye was also a little confused about what was going on at his live shows (which, up until recently, had consisted of him performing solo in front of a laptop and some outboard gear). "I thought, 'Maybe I'm not painting the right picture for people,'" he recalls. "I was playing for white boys that would stand there and stroke their chins, and that bothered me. Some would dance a little, but I was like, 'This music has sexiness in it and it needs to get to the right audience.'"

### DETROIT DRIVEN

The June release of *Two/Three*, the second installment of what's intended as a Dabrye trilogy, will go a long way towards reaching hip-hop heads. If his first two albums were sparse and instrumental, *Two/Three* plays like a cipher, as Dabrye meshes his distinctive beats with vocals from a variety of MCs. "Air" features MF Doom's intense narrative punctuated by SK-1-like interruptions from a vintage soundclash siren. "Nite Eats Day" places a fierce Beans a capella over a skittering rhythm.

The MCs here—including Wildchild and Vast Aire—don't mince words... and neither do Dabrye's cuts—nine out of 10 tracks on *Two/Three* clock in under four minutes. "I hate ornamental music," Mullinix says firmly. "I don't need to butter anything up." Simplicity is the order of the day for Dabrye, who uses just two samples for most of his signature sounds. Half the time these soundbites don't come

from a dusty record, he explains. "They're not even samples. I just went into Cool Edit Pro and generated a tone, and that was it—no keyboard or anything. Sometimes I'll use a low-pass filter and put a chorus on it, but I do it all with an old SoundBlaster card!"

"I'm definitely coming through hard on the synthesizer shit," he says of his new direction. "My new beats are coming off pretty dark, like a very cold and electronic vibe—almost ghetto tech." Not surprising, then, that *Two/Three* features a ton of Detroit MCs, including Kadence (who will tour with Dabrye), Invincible, Finale, Guilty Simpson, Paradime, Big Tone, Phat Cat, and Slum Village members Ta' Raach and Waajeed. "[*Two/Three*] is a very Detroit thing," explains Mullinix. "Unfortunately, Detroit doesn't get all the credit it deserves."

One Motor City stalwart who does get shine is the recently departed J Dilla, the founder of Slum Village who Dabrye credits with inspiring him to make instrumental hip-hop in the first place. "If you listen to Slum Village, you're talking about laidback, creamy soul that's street but still conscious, and without being backpacker," he says with admiration. The prolific producer shines as a rapper on Dabrye's "Game Over" single, the cornerstone of *Two/Three*, and the regard he has for Dilla is obvious. "Jay Dee was my hero," he says humbly. "A lot of people slept on his rapping style because it was little too subtle for most people to understand."

### GAME OVER?

The only question remaining is where does Dabrye go from here? When asked what direction he's planning on taking this trilogy, Mullinix presents two options. "The first idea is to make *Three/Three* an instrumental end-cap, so it'll go instrumental [album]/vocal [album]/instrumental [album]," he explains. "The other idea, since I have so much momentum in the hip-hop community, is to go [to] the next level with MCs. If I could get Busta Rhymes on the album I'd be stoked!"

Mullinix is quite expressive when he talks about other people's music and the MCs he's worked with, but he is noticeably more introverted when, as the interview comes to a close, he's grilled for adjectives to describe his own sound. "Music fills in the gaps," he offers. "It expresses the emotions that we, or at least I, don't have words for."

*Two/Three* is out June 13 on Ghostly International. [www.ghostly.com](http://www.ghostly.com)



Photo by Jessica Miller

## The Perfect Beat

Ghostly founder Sam Valenti IV on Dabrye

"I know that the original mission statement says 'lots of different genres,' but it wasn't actualized until I heard Tadd's music and his finesse with so many styles.

Dabrye's *One/Three* was a precision instrument working in minutiae; the beats were these blocks, but the etchings out of them made it what it was. Not too much, not too little—just the perfect space and content. "*Instrmntl* was this colorful, lush palette of samples meeting sonic textures.

The way I interpret *Two/Three* is that it's like the future: all the elements of hip-hop have been outlawed and Dabrye is like a banned book. He's recovered the artifacts of a post-industrial place, bringing together everything that was cool in Detroit. There are a lot of topical lyrics that talk about the end of time, but just because it's futuristic doesn't mean it's about hi-tech or digital cleanliness—Dabrye's music deals a lot with the emotion of imperfection."





# Totally Gnarly

As Gnarls Barkley, Danger Mouse and Cee-Lo team up for their strangest collaboration yet.  
WORDS MOSI REEVES PHOTOS MATTHEW DONALDSON

*"This album felt like an out-of-body experience." - Cee-Lo*

Gnarls Barkley isn't what you expect. The culmination of a years-long musical conversation between super-producer Danger Mouse and Southern soul machine Cee-Lo, it strays from the already-esoteric blueprint of both artists' careers into stranger and more anguished territory. Far from the cool, cynical tones of Damon Albarn (who drew DM into Gorillaz' *Demon Days*), or MF Doom's zippy, sardonic rhymes (which fueled Dangermouse's *The Mouse and the Mask*), Cee-Lo is Danger Mouse's most engaged and emotionally generous collaborator to date. Meanwhile, Danger Mouse brings out a different Cee-Lo from the one first heard in Goodie Mob or even on his more personal solo work.

The duo's new album, *St. Elsewhere*, contains 14 tracks whose subject matter ranges from suicidal tendencies ("Just a Thought") and necrophilia ("Necromancing") to action figures ("Transformer"). The lead single, "Crazy," exemplifies the album's dark, intense vibe. Cee-Lo sings, "I remember when/I remember/I remember when I lost my mind/But there was something so present about that place.../Hearing your emotions at an echo in so much space.../Does that make me crazy?/Possibly." Danger Mouse's production responds dramatically, double-tracking Cee-Lo's

backing vocals over an ominous bassline and violin chorus, evoking a feeling that's both high-strung and cathartic.

"'Crazy' is missionary work," explains Cee-Lo (who often speaks in ornate, metaphorical language). "The song is about freedom, exploration, and things of that nature. There's a thin line between crazy and conviction. I must have been either crazy or convinced.

"I believe that [someone who is] literally crazy, or technically crazy, or insane does not even question the thought [of being crazy]," he continues. "There is no doubt [when] you are insane. You never even think twice about it, you know what I'm saying? So the fact that it's asking a question is sanity."

Here, in Danger Mouse and Cee-Lo's own words, is the story behind the making of *St. Elsewhere*.

*St. Elsewhere* is out now on Downtown Recordings/Atlantic. [www.gnarlsbarkley.com](http://www.gnarlsbarkley.com)

**Cee-Lo:** Me and Danger hooked up for a remix on the Danger Mouse and Jemini album *Ghetto Pop Life*. I did a remix for them for "What You Sittin' On?" (released on DM and Jemini's *Twenty Six Inch* EP). After we had completed the session, he asked if he could send me a couple of things he was working on. I was like, "Cool."

**DM:** We wound up using three of the tracks I originally played [Cee-Lo] for the record: "Necromancer," "Just A Thought," and "Storm Coming."

**Cee-Lo:** He sent me some things that were impressive, to say the least. I asked him to let me use a couple of tracks. He was like, "I don't do tracks. I do albums." So I was like, "Okay. Let's do an album." It just happened from there.



*"Gnarls Barkley could be bigger than either one of us is ourselves." - Danger Mouse*

Gnarls Barkley:  
Danger Mouse (left)  
and Cee-Lo

**DM:** That was maybe October 2003, so that was before *The Grey Album* even came into my mind, and before [Cee-Lo] was finished with his last record [2004's *Cee-Lo Green is the Soul Machine*]. We had started on the record back then.

**Cee-Lo:** We actually didn't even speak about the direction of the album. He just more or less gave me the freedom to be me and do my thing.

**DM:** The music always came first. I would do a bunch of music. When I was happy with where something was at, I would give it to him. Then he would find his way into the song, as far as [singing goes]. Then we would record it together. There are about four or five songs where we were in separate places when the recording was done but, for the most part, we were together. He would go in and cut his vocal over the track. Sometimes I changed the track around to fit [his vocal]. But most of the time he adjusted himself. He wrote exactly to the way the music was.

**Cee-Lo:** With this particular album, a lot of the chord progressions and changes propelled me to melody. I didn't think that you could necessarily rhyme over this stuff. I guess that's where I'm at. Rhyming is a lot more limiting. To me, there are possibilities with the melodies and the harmonies. You can bend and shape and twist and turn and stretch a melody and harmony into different things. So I would confront that.

There are only a few things that you can rap about, and only a few things that you can wrap stuff in, you know? I'm not saying I'm done with MCing, but songwriting is the focal point at this point in my career.

**DM:** There are a couple of tracks on the Gnarls record where I would program a drum beat with the drum machine, then pick up the bass guitar, organs, and stuff like that—whatever I've got around. I like to collect old organs and old keyboards. I get a lot of my sounds out of those. Then I screw around on the bass. The guitar I'm not very good at, but I can still get some sounds out of it, or I'll get somebody else to do it with me.

I played all the stuff on "Smiling Faces," and then I [played the instruments] on "The Boogie Monster." [On "The Boogie Monster"] I found a cool, kicking snare sound, looped it, then played the bass and piano on there. It was real simple, but it was what I was looking for on that track: a real spooky, psychedelic [sound]. On "Smiling Faces," I wanted to make a Motown-sounding track.

**Cee-Lo:** Maybe these emotions are from many different pools of how I felt at different points in time. I always say [these tracks]

were the perfect excuse for me to elaborate and delve deeper into my emotions and into song. Songs like "Just a Thought" that contemplate suicide...I didn't think that I was saying anything shocking. I am told that pretty much everyone has thought about it. At least that's why the song is called "Just a Thought." I definitely don't have any plans on acting on it. It's just that it's crossed my mind a time or two.

It's really simple for me. People are going to take [*St. Elsewhere*] as dark, but I get so light about it, because I get a chance to express it. So it's not necessarily dark. It would be darker if I had no outlet for it. So thank God for music.

**DM:** We were working together and we thought we were going to try and do something different. We didn't want it to be "Cee-Lo and Danger Mouse" or whatever.

**Cee-Lo:** There's no big, generic story behind the name [Gnarls Barkley]. Danger Mouse said it one day and it just clicked. I trust his judgment, and I trust his vision. So I didn't even trip.

**DM:** It's not like we went, "Oh, we like Charles Barkley! Let's name it this!" It just kind of came through.

**Cee-Lo:** Initially, the album was meant to be an independent effort. We were funding it ourselves. It was only during the last quarter [of the making] of the record when we got the deal [from Warner/Atlantic]. We had already done 75 percent of it out-of-pocket.

**DM:** Gnarls Barkley is definitely its own thing, its own group. I wouldn't call it a side project because it could be bigger than either one of us is ourselves. [But] we went into it not thinking anything about whether it would be bigger or not. We both contributed to it, and we'll continue to. We definitely want to do it again.

**Cee-Lo:** I'm very pleased. It's some of my best work to date. I'm really coming into my own. I'm really growing, and I can look upon it as me coming into my own. This album felt like an out-of-body experience.



*"It's like I've been resurrected."*

## *Andre's New Posse*

South Bronx hip-hop giant AG expands his crate... in California.  
WORDS JESSE SERWER ILLUSTRATION NIGEL DENNIS FOR ELECTRIC HEAT

Andre Barnes (a.k.a. AG) no longer lives in the Patterson Houses—where he saw Grandmaster Flash and Grand Wizard Theodore scratching in the park as a small child, and scribbled the impeccable rhymes on Showbiz and AG's impossibly mature *Runaway Slave* LP as a teenager—but he's still very much a part of the tapestry here.

"These are quiet projects, but you wouldn't believe the violence that goes on here at night," notes the diminutive rapper as he enters the South Bronx housing complex, stopping to chat with some old friends. Across the street, a mural promoting his 1999 solo debut, *The Dirty Version*—and also paying homage to each of his fellow soldiers in the legendary Digg'in' In The Crates crew—remains intact along the side of a Chinese restaurant, six years later. "People always want to put posters there but the owner always says, 'You gotta call AG.'"

While he now lives across the borough, on a typical day you'll find AG at his boy Woo's place, indulging in his favorite vice: playing sports videogames with friends for bragging rights and money.

"Competition is big in the hood," AG says. "It gives you an opportunity to show how good you are—people here don't often get those opportunities. So we take

this shit serious. We've played for around \$500 a game—not against each other, 'cause the arguments get out of hand, but we'll go play five guys in another building."

Harnessing that competitive energy while a student at DeWitt Clinton High School in the late '80s, Andre The Giant—the moniker's a reference to his lyrical vastness (eventually shortened to AG)—entered the harsh world of Bronx freestyle ciphers, where he battled and immediately befriended DITC founder Lord Finesse. Through Finesse he met Showbiz and, finding chemistry with the MC/producer, the pair quickly took matters into their own hands, self-releasing their *Soul Clap* EP in 1990. They sold the EP out of Show's trunk before signing as the first act on Payday Records. The result was the visionary *Runaway Slave* (1991) and its back-to-basics follow-up, *Goodfellas* (1995). But in 1998, around the time of Show and AG's *Full Scale*, and his own *The Dirty Version*, AG says he found himself falling back.

"Whether I didn't like where hip-hop was going or I didn't like dealing with the phony people in this business, I just did the music and let other people do the rest," he admits. "That's over with now. Lyrically, I'm at my prime and I'm out to let people know

*"Hip-hop isn't meant to be clean. It's for the artist that has a nasal problem, or doesn't look so cute."*

that. There's a purpose for me, after 17 years, to still look and feel young; to flow like this. I have to show the people that reason, feel me? It's like I've been resurrected."

For his latest project, the soon-to-be-released *Get Dirty Radio*, AG stepped away from the Bronx (for the most part, although Finesse and Show each contribute a beat) and headed to California, where he hooked up with Look Records' DJ Design. At the Look office in San Francisco, Design introduced AG to producers he'd heard about, like Madlib and J Dilla, and ones he hadn't, like Dabrye and Madlib's brother, Oh No.

"When I got these beats, it just took me back. I feel producers like Madlib [and] Dilla are an extension of Diggin' In The Crates. It was like putting something that people know from Diggin'-myself-and mixing it with people that were influenced by Diggin', and making one package."

As Design puts it: "AG was someone who all the producers running the underground now grew up listening to. I thought if we could put him together with this new wave of producers, it would bring AG a whole new audience, bring about some interesting collaborations, and be a good opportunity for my label. Everyone I talked to immediately wanted to be on this."

The only guest voices on *Get Dirty Radio's* 17 filler-free tracks are those of DITC's Party Arty; Lil' Rose, a 13-year-old family friend embarking on a rap career; and Aloe Blacc, who adds a pair of hooks on "Take A Ride" and "Hip Hop Quotable." Cross-referencing AG's previous solo effort, *The Dirty Version*, the title refers to a back-to-basics, DITC-inspired approach to hip-hop. "Hip-hop isn't meant to be clean," says AG. "It's for the artist that has a nasal problem, or doesn't look so cute. Hip-hop started 'cause no one was listening to us kids in the Bronx. It was saying, 'They wouldn't let me in anyway so I want to go further to the left.' Now our music is blending in with clean music—that has me upset. If we keep making music in that direction we'll have no culture left for people who want to say 'Fuck America.' Not saying I want to say that, but there's a bunch of kids here that need to let the world know what's going on. And if they clean the music up, you'll never know."

AG's *Get Dirty Radio* is out soon on Look Records. [www.lookrecords.com](http://www.lookrecords.com)

## Still Diggin'

Where are Diggin in the Crates now?

The Bronx-centered vanguard of authentic hip-hop since the late 1980s, the DITC crew has followed divergent paths since Big L's 1999 murder and the release of their self-titled group LP in 2000. Here's what the core members have been up to.

### BUCKWILD

The least visible member, super-producer Buck is cashing the most checks, with production credits on The Game's *Documentary* and 50 Cent's *The Massacre*. Black Rob's "Whoa" and Biggie's "I Got A Story Tell" are among the all-time classics he's laced.

### DIAMOND

The DITC elder statesman has often gone AWOL since crafting the 1992 masterpiece *Stunts, Blunts and Hip-Hop*, but he's about to follow up 2004's self-released *Grown Man Talk* with *Needful Things*, an album featuring rhymes from producers like Alchemist and Nottz.

### FAT JOE

While he might have formed the Terror Squad (and collaborated with Nelly), Joey Crack remains a card-carrying member of the crew that backed him on early classics like *Represent*; plus, he promised another DITC album in the notes of 2005's *All or Nothing*.

### LORD FINESSE

Crew founder Finesse is putting the finishing touches on the long-awaited *Funky Technician Remix Project*, which features DJ Premier, Pete Rock, Large Professor, Madlib, Kenny Dope, and Marley Marl all attempting to improve upon the beats Finesse produced for his and DJ Mike Smooth's classic 1989 debut LP.

### OC

Brooklyn native OC returned with a vengeance in 2005, wrecking shop on the highly sought-after limited release *Starchild* and the solid *Smoke and Mirrors*. A re-upped version of *Starchild*, produced entirely by Pete Rock, is rumored.

### SHOWBIZ

Former MC/producer (and now just producer) Show released *Street Talk*, the closest thing to a full-on DITC album in years, in October 2005.

For more on DITC, check Jun Oki's new DVD documentary, *SBX! Holding Down the Tradition* (BBP Productions).

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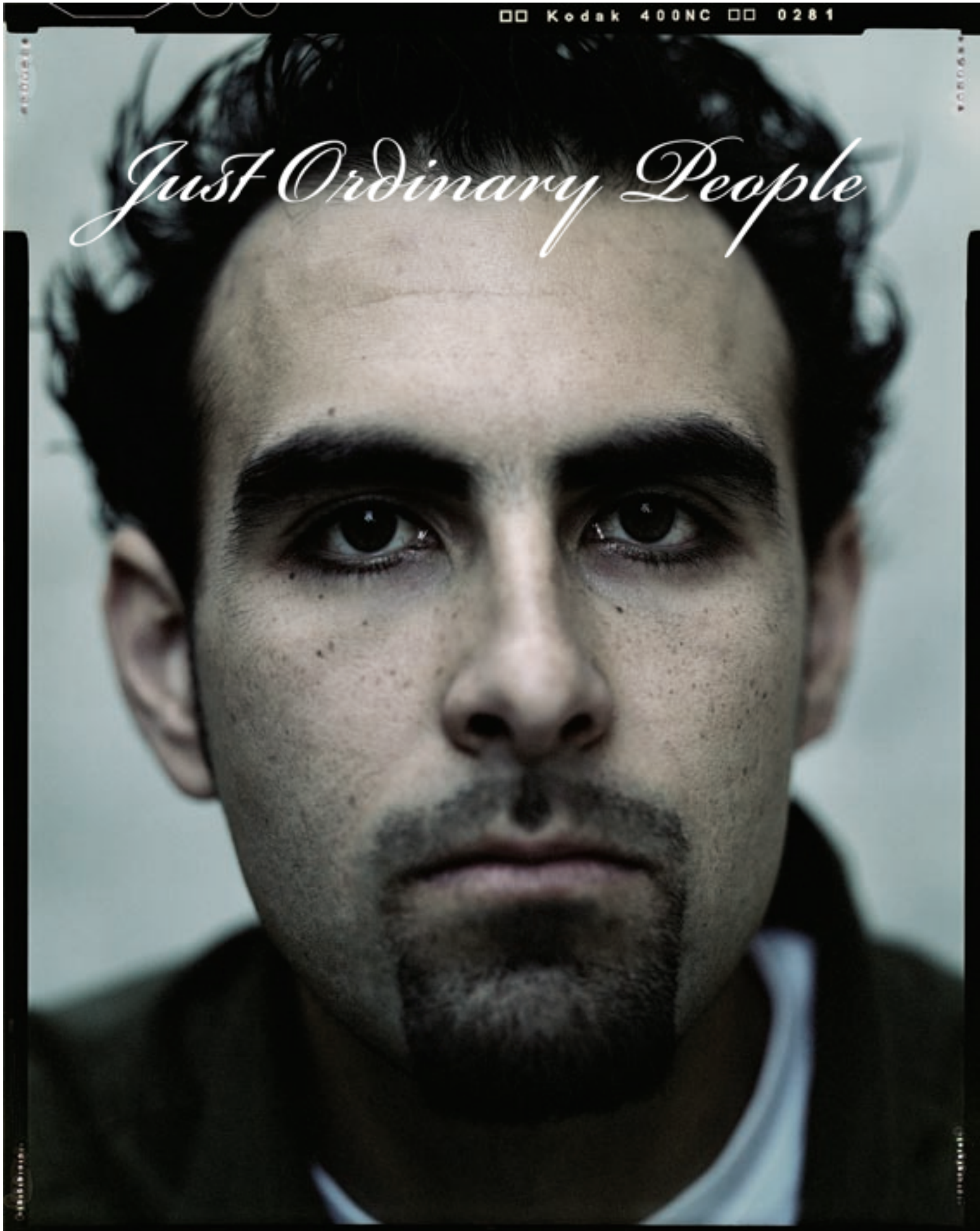
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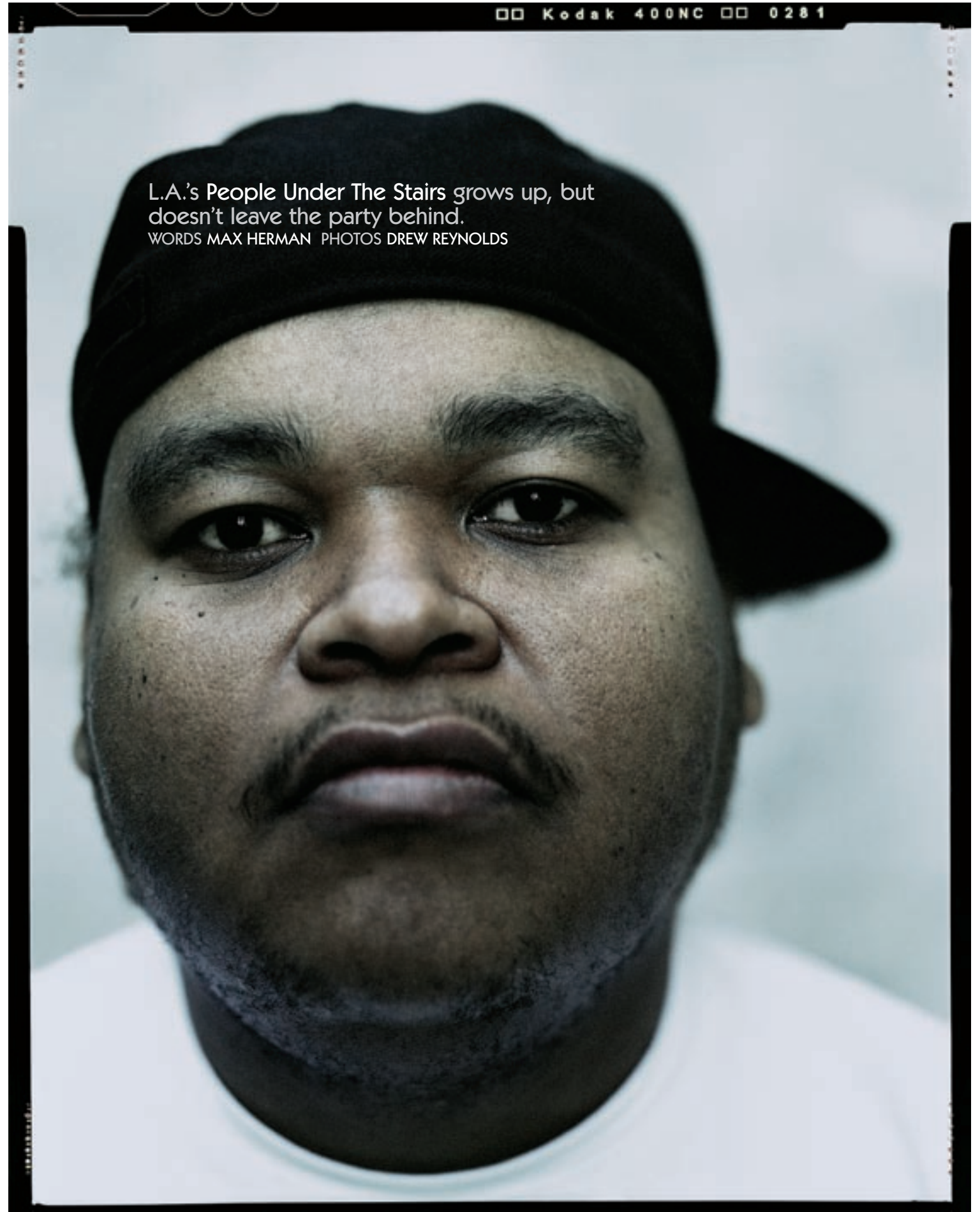
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*Just Ordinary People*



L.A.'s People Under The Stairs grows up, but doesn't leave the party behind.  
WORDS MAX HERMAN PHOTOS DREW REYNOLDS





People Under The Stairs: Thes One (left) and Double K

Since 1998, the duo known as People Under The Stairs has been purveying down-to-earth hip-hop ideal for backyard barbeques and cruising down the avenue. For Thes One and Double K, it's always been more about banging out the funk than bending your mind with rhymes. But things change, even for PUTS.

On their fourth album, *Stepfather*, longtime fans will be happy to find Thes and Double K upholding their trademark party-rocking flavor—most notably on the virtual house party, “Jamboree Pt. 1.” The duo has also decided to take a close look at themselves and society, making many of these songs their most thoughtful ever. “I thank Thes for that one,” Double K says of *Stepfather*'s reflective verses. “You leave it up to me, we'd be talking about partying the whole album, but we had to get some other stuff up in there, man.”

Though still adolescent b-boys at heart, these two Angelenos are pushing 30 and rightfully want to get their inner thoughts on wax. From paying respect to their families for raising them right (“Days Like This”) to reexamining good relationships they let go sour (“More Than You Know”), PUTS leaves very few stones unturned. They haven't gone soft, though. As Thes explains, “It's one of those things where we'll be outside talking about some shit like what we're talking about on those songs, and then we'll go into the studio and this time at least have the balls to be like, ‘You know what? Fuck it. We were just talking about this

*“If you're not hanging out getting drunk with us, you ain't on the record.” — Thes One*

outside, about people's grandparents or whatever—let's talk about this [on the record].”

As a result, not a single song sounds forced—listening to the record is like eavesdropping on a conversation on the porch one laidback summer night. Of course, porch talk isn't always that deep. One of the most heartfelt new tracks, “Eat Street,” is about going on missions to find the best grub in L.A. and beyond. “That's the realist shit we ever made—ever,” Thes says, without a hint of hesitation. “Dudes talk about, ‘Yo, I made this song about the drug game and that's the real shit,’ but for People Under The Stairs, ‘Eat Street’ is the real shit. That's as real as it gets, like, ‘Where we gonna eat?’”

“We always trying to find a spot,” confirms Double K.

#### CHECK THE TECHNIQUE

When they're not on the hunt for good eats, Thes and Double K can often be found searching for that perfect beat. Albums like *O.S.T.* and *Questions in the Form of An Answer* demonstrated the duo's love and respect for Golden Age hip-hop with lo-fi production and tons of dusty loops from another era; the sounds of these records were created on what some would consider outdated equipment (including the E-Mu SP-1200 drum machine). But just as they decided to expand upon their lyrical content on *Stepfather*, PUTS updated their beat-making style as well.

“You listen to the old albums, it was a lot of jazz loops and guitars,” says Double K. “This one [has] a heavy funk attitude; [there's] more synthesizer-type stuff. [It's] still within what we're doing, just the instruments have changed.”

Thes, who handles the bulk of the production, definitely wasn't trying to duplicate previous efforts, even though he has publicly denounced hip-hop producers' use of keyboards in the past. “Neither Mike (Double K) nor I are going to get in the studio and try and make another *O.S.T.*,” he says. “It'd be dumb to try and come with ‘Montego Slay 2’ and ‘Acid Raindrops 2.’ I know everyone loves those songs, but every record, we gotta try and make something a little bit different, but still us.”

Despite the addition of synths and the like, *Stepfather* includes an abundance of vintage jams. Hell, Double K even has a song called “Letter To The Old School,” which sounds like it was recorded in 1983, with siren sound effects blaring in the back-

ground. Just because they have increased their arsenal of equipment doesn't mean you're going to see Thes making beats exclusively on Pro Tools or Double K scratching on CD turntables any time soon. They are still artists of (mostly) traditional means.

In fact, Thes is particularly disgusted by beatmakers who think technology is going to make them sound fresh. “If you make your whole song in Pro Tools, your song is going to sound a certain way,” says Thes. “And that might not even be a bad thing, but it's like every damn song I hear, I can tell if it was recorded on a computer. And it may be crispy and it may hit and whatever [but] I don't give a shit if your song *knocks*, whatever that means. The shit's got no flavor—it's got no character. I'd rather have Double K and [me] freestyling over a tape loop because it's got character, like, ‘Oh damn, it sounds like it was recorded in a club.’”

“It's never what you're using, it's who's using it,” confirms Double K. “Everything has to have some soul in it and computers don't have soul, neither do drum machines—you have to have it.”

#### BROS BEFORE PROS

Whether refusing to partake in certain technological advances or ignoring whatever style of rhyme might be hot at the moment, these People are practically living in their own hip-hop bubble. Last year, Double K appeared on Breakestra's *Hit The Floor* album and Thes assisted Giant Panda in producing and recording their debut album, *Fly School Reunion*, but the duo has almost never indulged in guest appearances or collaborations. They couldn't care less about extracurricular activities; at the risk of looking like loners, they prefer to keep it in the family—or not do it at all.

“As far as [working with] Giant Panda goes, I realized that a bunch of hip-hop dudes lived, like, two blocks away from me at my old house on Cambridge [Street],” says Thes. “[It was] just one of those natural things where it's like, first you're homies, everyone's drinking beer on the porch, and the next thing you know, you're making a record.”

“Everyone knows we don't email people verses and get *hot* rappers to guest appear on our records,” he continues. “If you're not hanging out getting drunk with us, you ain't on the record. And even after that, you probably won't be on the record...unless you're George Clinton.”

*Stepfather* is out now on Basement Records. [www.peopleunderthestairs.net](http://www.peopleunderthestairs.net)



PUTS in their garage arcade

*Put Your Quarters Up*  
Life isn't all about eats and beats for PUTS...it's also about arcade games.

“Pretty much any Atari game from the '80s was something I dumped a lot of quarters into at the donut shop and/or the liquor store,” admits Thes. “Videogames are definitely a part of us,” agrees Double K. Thes' garage is already filling up with the arcade games he and Double K grew up playing after school. And he doesn't see an end in sight. “I either got it or I'm trying to get it,” boasts Thes, whose hobby is restoring vintage arcade games. Here are just a few of his favorites:

**MARBLE MADNESS:** “It was designed by a 13-year-old kid. It's got that '80s-whiz-kid flavor.”

**KLAX:** “It's a slept-on puzzle game from, like, '89.”

**SUPER SPRINT:** “That's a great one for drunk driving. I think Double K probably prefers *Arkanoid* because of the mothership in the beginning.” [Double K laughs]

**STREET FIGHTER 2:** “It's a classic homie battle game. There's mad stories about *Street Fighter*. Even now, if we go into the club and we see *Street Fighter*, there go People Under The Stairs. All you're gonna hear is, ‘Aww shit!’ The quarters are gonna come flying out.”

# Coming Clean

UK hip-hop's enfant terrible, The Streets, tells all.  
WORDS VIVIAN HOST PHOTO CHRISTOPHER GLANCY

Sitting across from me—barefoot, in an Agnès B suit jacket and diamond pinky ring, and fidgeting mercilessly with the hotel's cordless phone—is 27-year-old Sagittarian Mike Skinner, who, as The Streets, has done quite a bit to elevate the emo bad boy's place in hip-hop. His daytime persona is polite and gracious, and he dabbles in distinctly upper-middle-class pleasures. A Bill Bryson book sits on the end table, a bottle of Dior Homme cologne in the bathroom. He and his publicist discuss high-end dinners and the lemon juice fasts they've been on; in total sincerity, he cues up '80s slow-dance ballads (including Patrick Swayze's "She's Like The Wind" and Kim Carnes' "Bette Davis Eyes") on the stereo.

Though Skinner's clearly capable of being a gentleman when he needs to, he breaks out in a devilish grin when talking about spending his birthday with strippers in Vegas, a saucy interview he's just had with *Black Book*, and the naughty posters in the American Apparel store. And though he doesn't admit to anything more scandalous than that during this interview, he doesn't exactly have to—his third album, *The Hardest Way to Make an Easy Living*, contains all the dirt you would ever want to know. From getting in fist fights with his manager to smoking crack with pop stars to complaining about camera phones (they make it impossible to do lines of coke in front of complete strangers), this record is juicier than any Jackie Collins novel.



*The Hardest Way* is a fluorescent-lit mug shot of The Streets—an extreme step in the evolution that began with the poignant ennui of 2002's *Original Pirate Material* and its follow-up, the caper soundtrack known as *A Grand Don't Come For Free*. Skinner's sound—monotone storytelling, sing-songy choruses, beats that veer wildly between moody downtempo, R&B/lounge numbers, and grimy techno hip-hop—definitely won't appeal to everyone, but that's not what this is about. This, to paraphrase Usher, is Mike Skinner's confession.

*The Hardest Way to Make an Easy Living* is out now on Vice Recordings. [www.thestreets.co.uk](http://www.thestreets.co.uk), [www.vice-recordings.com](http://www.vice-recordings.com)

**Did you have an identity crisis lyrically once you were living a celebrity lifestyle, and weren't the 'voice of the common man' anymore?**

No, not really. I actually felt quite excited. Suddenly, there was a lot of crazy shit to write about. People don't really like change, but that's what I've always stood for. Before, people always thought what I was writing about was too mundane; at first, they didn't seem to want to hear about themselves. Now everything is about the mundane, so maybe they won't want to hear about celebrity.

**What's the biggest lie you've read about yourself?**

The weirdest thing is how you get linked to people, other celebrities that you don't even know. Like Natasha Bedingfield; I've barely spoken to her, and they said I was dating her. But my favorite rumor is the one that says I'm a genius. Who doesn't want to think they're a genius? Plus, it helps me get laid.

**What artist or group were you obsessed with as a teenager?**

I was quite into Wu-Tang Clan. There was a lot to buy into, a lot of different characters within the group. I really liked Raekwon's rhymes and RZA: that album as Bobby Digital was amazing. In fact, when I was younger I always had the idea to make this group called 2000BC, a kind of rip-off of the Wu-Tang Clan. I'm from Birmingham and our soccer club is called Birmingham City, hence BCFC. So the "BC" in 2000BC would stand for Birmingham City, but it would be a whole load of us rapping about what Birmingham would have been like 2,000 years ago. [Laughs] I don't think I've ever told anyone that before.

**What artist's mythology do you really get into?**

I really like Johnny Cash and Jimi Hendrix. Everyone's got demons and everyone is struggling with the fact that nothing quite adds up and Johnny Cash was able to be honest about that. He walked the line—what a cliché, but he did—between good and bad. But the bad stuff wasn't even bad—it was just honest. Jimi Hendrix has always appealed to me because he was focused, determined. I like the image of him cooking breakfast with his guitar on. I identify with that. A lot of times I'm writing lyrics while eating breakfast.

**Why did you decide to make this album so confessional?**

A lot has already been written about me. A lot of stuff has come out that I didn't want to come out. People in my local pub know the better part of what I regret. At least this way, people hear my side of the story. I didn't want to brush over it. I want to explain the reasons why everything has happened. Looking back, I didn't want to go in the local pub and have the guy behind the bar laughing at me. Basically, anything I admit to myself I will write about.

**What quality do you most detest in other people?**

Well, they say the things you hate the most in other people are things you hate about yourself. I don't like it when people are untactful or superficial...or too sensitive.



## *Dirty Looks*

Toronto's rock-dance juggernaut MSTRKRFT pleases dive-bar denizens and delirious ravers.

WORDS BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI PHOTOS GEOFF MCLEAN

*I*n the video for MSTRKRFT's first single, "Easy Love," four well-endowed women in tight business attire sit patiently in a room. After suggestively drinking four strawberry milkshakes, they individually lie down on a dentist's chair and have gallons of a pink, creamy substance dripped in their mouths in what some might call a pornographic fashion.

Jesse F. Keeler, half of the Toronto DJ/production duo (pronounced "master craft"), begs to differ. "[The girls are] drinking milkshakes, and then the milkshakes get fed to them. That's the whole fucking video," he says indignantly, as he chows down on an omelette at a Toronto restaurant. "It's only sexual if you've got that background of information for your brain to reference. A six-year-old kid is going to think it's funny, like being slimed on Nickelodeon."

It's difficult to believe that Keeler and his partner ALP didn't intend to arouse some viewers—provocation is what they do best. Just look at the two of them: Their over-it attitude and great hair make them perfect hipster pin-ups. But their music—complete with thick basslines, aggressive drums, and thumping beats—is what's really driving their growing fanbase wild. Watching them perform conjures up some fuzzy feelings too; you get the sense that there's no dingy rock 'n' roll club that they can't turn into a sweaty, over-sexed rave.





*"I was into punk and...now I'm playing techno in a club in Chicago, headbanging like a raver." - Jesse Keeler*

MSTRKRFT: Al-P (left) and Jesse F. Keeler

Making hearts (and other body parts) flutter wasn't always what MSTRKRFT was about. The duo is best known for fashioning a plethora of rock remixes, tackling everything from Metric and Bloc Party to Juliette and The Licks. The twosome first garnered attention at last year's SXSW festival in Austin, Texas. That's when Vice released MSTRKRFT's remix of Panthers' "Thank Me With Your Hands," a track that outlined the group's remixing blueprint: no guitars or grunginess, just heavy bass and infectious house beats. It's a style some of their clients dislike.

"I don't think we've ever used anything other than vocals from any song we've been given," says Al-P. "And some people take offence to that," adds Keeler. "Vice was going to do a video for the [Panthers remix] that was basically just the singer singing and the band packing up their equipment and leaving. I think they nipped it in the bud because the band probably put up a real fight, like, 'Please don't make that video. It's our biggest song and we're not even in it.'"

It's not uncommon for a MSTRKRFT version to fare better than the source track. Their remix of Bloc Party's "Two More Years" received more radio play than the original, and their take on Metric's "Monster Hospital" is getting tossed around the net like a helpless crowd surfer.

Keeler and Al-P's penchant for rock 'n' roll remixes is directly related to their status as reformed rockers. Al gave it up years ago (he

was in Girls Are Short), but Keeler's having more trouble shedding his past. As one half of aggressive drum-and-bass-only rock duo Death From Above 1979, he's been on a bass-wielding bender for the last couple years. Although he plans to release another DFA1979 album in the future, he's not totally happy with where the outfit is going. "[We] became an 'alternative rock' band, which I can't stand," he says of the group, which toured with NIN and Queens of the Stone Age last year. "I hate that stuff. I don't listen to it. I don't buy it. In no point in my musical progression did I like Nirvana."

No matter. Keeler thinks MSTRKRFT has the potential to be way bigger than DFA1979. "There's a way broader audience for it," he explains. "With MSTRKRFT we've already gone to places that DFA1979 never went to—like going down to Miami to play for days on end."

Their debut disc, *The Looks*, should further cement their reputation as rock-dance's new wild boys. The album is mostly house music shot with rock attitude, but it also features electro, disco, and synthesized vocals à la Daft Punk. Keeler, who grew up on soul and funk, says the record marks his return to the dancefloor. "[After Led Zeppelin], I was into punk and then gradually I got into disco," he says. "Now I'm playing techno in a club in Chicago, headbanging like a raver."

MSTRKRFT's *The Looks* is out May 16 on Last Gang Records.

[www.mstrkrft.com](http://www.mstrkrft.com), [www.lastgangrecords.com](http://www.lastgangrecords.com)



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# Trip Fantastic

L.A. producer Nobody details his obsession with psychedelic rock of the '60s and '70s.  
 WORDS ELVIN ESTELA (NOBODY) PHOTOS B+

*M*y obsession with '60s psychedelic rock started around 1997, shortly after I joined college radio station KXLU 88.9 FM in Los Angeles. At the same time, I was also spinning rare groove and funk 45s at various small clubs, which led to an eventual meeting with a true superfreak. Digging on the heavy funk I was playing was a character who towered over everyone and looked straight-up like Peter Fonda in outrageous psychedelic garb. This was eons before this modern-day retro-rock revival, when a guy like this might get his ass beat walking down the street.

He also talked the talk—he was asking me about the ‘heavy tunes that were dynamite and outta sight’ that were played that night. I was a bit taken aback by his freakiness, but also intrigued—thus began my relationship with Tartarex, the psychedelic guru from the OC that hipped me to the world of underground, mostly European, psychedelic rock. Every chance meeting with Rex resulted in me buying at least one of his mixtapes, with names like *Dose of Orange Memories* and *Lady Sex and the Flowermen*. Each handmade tape contained at least 25 songs, all recorded by bands that I had never heard of, complete with liner notes and photocopied group photos. He also made sure to include the year of release and country of origin, something missing from the rare groove mixtapes I was buying a few years earlier.

At first listen, most of the music—in particular the soaring four-part harmonies—sounded very Beatles-esque, but it grew on me. I immediately started my search, as any good beat digger would, for originals of some of these songs—I hadn't been so excited since finding old jazz and soul records that my favorite hip-hop producers got hip to years earlier. At the same time, I discovered that many hip-hop producers beat me to the punch; hearing the “Jingling Baby” break on a pretty square record by L.A. studio group The Grassroots was mind-bending as well as copping the Turtles record that got De La in heat with the RIAA (but not my hometown heroes Freestyle Fellowship, oddly enough).

What was even more of a mind fuck was the amount of shit that hadn't been sampled. When I found my first copy of the Silver Apples' first LP I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was like a remix of an old Beatles tune with the most banging drums. Checking out other bands—Can, July, Damnation of Adam Blessing—let me know that there were probably tons of acts that had a penchant for mixing their drums loud as hell with drummers that could hold down some pretty sick beats.

There are some psych records that truly stand out as solid albums musically and production-wise, and also draw the head bob out of even the most discriminating hip-hop kid. Here are the top five that I bring out to get the party started.





## Nobody's Five Most Essential Psychedelic 45 Bangers

### 1. The Millennium: Prelude (Columbia)

The drummer and keyboard player of this band once belonged to garage legends The Music Machine, but they traded in their black outfits and black gloves for the sparkling clean white suits of Curt Boettcher's Millennium. Their one last aggressive tune together is the intro to the band's soft psych classic album *Begin*. The most vibrant, catchy harpsichord melody is destroyed by the heaviest drums recorded on the West Coast.

### 2. Aphrodite's Child: Air (Polydor)

This song sounds like The Meters on acid. Along with the funky drumming and over-the-top organ playing, it has the catchiest wordless chorus à la The Meters' 'Look-a Py Py.' Then the psychedelics kick in as Vangelis sings 'Your mind is full of air!' over a Leslie organ and the entire song dissolves into phasing and feedback. And the drums! They're all over-compressed and crash-heavy with phasing and stuff.

### 3. The Time Machine: Turn Back the Time (Pathé)

Not the danciest of tunes, but an extremely drum-heavy number by a '60s French band that is sure to please. The sincerity of the lyrics, along with the violins and pan flute, give it a really sweet Euro-pop vibe that is complimented by huge banging drums that stay steady throughout the song. If that isn't enough to convince you, the b-side is the same song backwards with only pan flute and piano! I remember playing this to DJ Shadow's approval at the first Product Placement show in L.A..

### 4. The African People: Neanderthal Man (Polydor)

Holy shit! A cover of 'Neanderthal Man' by an African psych band...or is it a French band pretending to be African? I don't know, but I found this one after eating two hash bon-bons in Amsterdam. When it came on in the headphones, the heavens opened up, and when the drum break happened I saw a man appear from the heavens with a bone in his nose. It's like Dilla played the drums for this band in 1971 somehow.

### 5. People: Glastonbury (Deram)

Not to be confused with the American band, this is a one-off single by a U.K. studio group. Things start off a bit slow and eerie with bell tolls and spooky vocals, but once the second verse comes in, the group's perfect harmonies cruise over a sparse piano and percussion groove that's supported by a very heavy 6/8 drum beat. You are treated to a sweet flute solo and an even sweeter drum solo towards the end of the song that leaves you with the kick drum buried deep in your chest.

Nobody & Mystic Chords of Memory's *Tree Colored See* is out now on Mush. [www.nobodybeatthebiz.com](http://www.nobodybeatthebiz.com), [www.dirtyloop.com](http://www.dirtyloop.com), [www.plugresearch.com](http://www.plugresearch.com)

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# THE OFFICIAL Order of The Serpentine Pledge

I will use the conscience-cleansing power of my Axe Snake Peel shower scrub to wash away shame caused by a questionable hook-up, and not as an excuse to commit acts of debauchery, like:



- Cavorting with exotic dancers with wandering eyes
- Hosting Roman style orgies
- Grinding with mother/daughter tandems
- X-rated web activity
- Anything involving paper bags
- "Trolling"
- The keeping of concubines
- Massaging "around the way girls"
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# Disco Fried

Dutch producer Alden Tyrell combines the best of the past with the tricks of the present.

WORDS BRION PAUL PHOTOS MATHILDE KARRER

*"The computer is the devil."*

While gallons of ink have been ceremoniously spilled over the music scenes of Detroit, Berlin, and Chicago, the southern Dutch shipping port of Rotterdam remains a neglected focal point of electronic innovation. But even an accidental tourist in the city would notice the extent to which electronic music permeates life on the Nieuwe Maas river. Open the door of any cab and be bludgeoned by the bellowing sound of 180-beat-per-minute gabber; pass any café with its doors ajar and galloping 808s pour out.

"It's really nothing special," counters dreadlocked Rotterdam artist Alden Tyrell. "It's flat and grey and there are some guys who share the same passion for music and sitting at home—we like to complain about life and make music."

Blasé though he may be, this electronic superman is the one-man embodiment of the city's electronic music history. Tyrell has steadily worked his way into the pantheon of nu-disco with releases on Clone, Viewlexx, and DUB (under aliases including A Visitor From Another Meaning, Partisan Midi, Ardathbey, and with friends as EOG and Frustrated Figures). His frothy, expertly arranged take on the dancefloor-filling golden years of Italo-disco and NRG is compelling; stories of the past can be heard in every bouncing sine-wave bassline and each dramatic, synthesized woosh.

Growing up, electronic music was everywhere for Tyrell. "When I was 12, the school invited a local engineer to class who brought some synthesizers that had me totally flabbergasted," he remembers. "And the stuff I heard on the radio sounded like it coming was from outer space." Radio played a huge part in his formative years, introducing the young Tyrell to prodigious NRG producers like Bobby O and Claudio Simonetti. "The Hague was the Italo city," he says. "This illegal radio station called City Radio Den Haag played non-stop disco and early electro stuff. I lived in a little suburb nearby and could just receive it on my radio."

It wasn't long before Tyrell purchased his first synthesizer and was playing along to tracks on his friends' nationally syndicated radio program. "We did mixes for the Soul Show," he recalls. "Cutting and pasting the tapes, mixing the records, and me doing the synth stuff and using a small drum computer. They thought we used samplers, but we couldn't afford them at all as it was 1984!"

Twenty years on and reigning pop queens are once again bathing themselves in the warm light of disco, while Italo records [such as Fantasy Life's "Over & Over" and Models' "J.R. Robot"] fetch triple digits on eBay. This is due in no small part to the ripple effect caused by Rotterdam's disco-loving record-label ring, which takes in the Clone empire and all its sub-labels as well as I-F's Viewlexx imprint. "We're all friends," Tyrell explains of

the connection. "Clone is just around the corner from my house and even closer to the studio. I-F lives in Delft, 10 minutes from Rotterdam. Like me, he almost never leaves his cave."

Truly, Tyrell lurks in the shadows; though he frequently masters records and produces tracks, he remains notoriously reclusive. This position is about to change with the release of his first full-length, *Times Like These*. Gathering together sought-after singles like "Love Explosion" and "Knockers" alongside new tracks, *Times* is a remarkable homage to the analog-powered euphoria of a cosmic bygone era, yet it is polished with skillful engineering and computer know-how.

Remaining true to the originators, Tyrell mostly favors old-school machinery. "I have some quite old synths and a whole range of drum machines," he muses. "My favorite machines are the Oberheim OBXA, MiniMoog, and the Roland TR808." But, much to his chagrin, he often must turn to higher processing speeds to get the final mixing and editing done.

"The computer is the devil," he says. "I try to use it just as a tape recorder instead of a sound source, but it's too tempting. The most difficult thing to handle is the fact that you can postpone all decisions you have to make while making a track—you can work on a track forever."

*Times Like These* is out now on Clone. [www.clone.nl](http://www.clone.nl)

## Wax On

Alden Tyrell lists his favorite records, in no particular order.

**Soul Sonic Force "Planet Rock":** "808 supreme!"

**Vangelis *Blade Runner* end theme:** "Those dramatic strings just go on and on, layer upon layer."

**The Creatures *Believe In Yourself*:** "The story of my life...and it's still not working."

**New Order "Blue Monday":** "Ultra-fat production. Every time somebody plays this in a club, it blows away everything else!"

**Casco "Cybernetic Love":** "The bassline and vocoder are unbelievable."

**Mr. Flaggio "Take a Chance":** "The vocals and vocoders again...great stuff. It gives me goosebumps."

*Hesherville,  
94110*

PHOTOGRAPHY: MORGAN HOWLAND  
STYLING: VIVIAN HOST  
ASSISTANT: BERYL FINE  
MAKE-UP & HAIR: SUSIE SOBOL  
MODELS: ANTAEUS, BRETTE, DEGA,  
EMMA, KAREN, NAOMI, AND STEFAN  
SPECIAL THANKS BRYANT  
RUTLEDGE, KARI AMBROSIUS,  
RYAN MERRY, KARINA RAMOS,  
AND KRISTIN VINCENT





**Opening spread:** Antaeus wears IRAK for 1977 t-shirt, Kr3w Greco Lows jeans, Jeremy Fish for Fifty24SF hat, Monitaly Sarape slip-ons, and his own jacket. Emma wears American Apparel tank and underwear.

**Left (from left to right):** Brette wears her own button-down and earrings, Fresh Jive t-shirt, Tripp NYC pants, and Vans moccasins, and her own earrings. Emma wears Matix jeans and her own drug rug. Dega wears East River Drive t-shirt, Meltin Pot jeans, Vans shoes, Kr3w JG sunglasses, and his own hoodie. Antaeus wears IRAK for 1977 t-shirt, Kr3w Greco Lows jeans, Jeremy Fish for Fifty24SF hat, and his own jacket and watch.

**Above:** Emma (window) wears Fresh Jive t-shirt. Stefan wears his own vintage jacket, Kr3w AR jeans, and Dega's Native American headdress. Naomi wears her own dress. The Dark Stranger wears her own sweatshirt and boots, and Serious pants.



emma



**Karen** wears Dr. Hot Dog t-shirt, Meltin' Pot jeans, Vans Vault sneakers, and her own bandanna. **Brette** wears her own button-down and earrings, Fresh Jive t-shirt, Tripp NYC pants, and Vans moccasins. **Stefan** wears his own vintage jacket and embroidered spider t-shirt, Kr3w AR jeans, and Dega's Native American headdress. **Naomi** wears her own dress. **Emma** wears Matix jeans, Vans shoes, and her own drug rug. **Dega** wears East River Drive t-shirt, Meltin Pot jeans, Vans shoes, Kr3w JG sunglasses, and his own hoodie.

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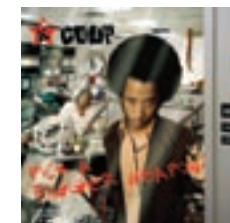
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BOOTS RILEY

ALBUM  
REVIEWS  
5.06

THE COUP  
PICK A BIGGER WEAPON  
Epitaph/US/CD



PUNK, R&B, AND  
PARLIAMENT INSPIRE A  
HIP-HOP DUO'S LATEST  
(R)EVOLUTION.

Though he's a fiery and uncompromising political rapper, Coup frontman Boots Riley's *modus operandi* includes more than just polemics.

That's not to say that *Pick a Bigger Weapon* is missing any governmental slams; while Kanye captured the media's attention with his post-Katrina criticism of the President, Boots sets up metaphorical suggestions that put Dubya and Saddam Hussein into bed on the aptly named "Head (Of State)." The Bay Area revolutionary can also wax poetic about everyday problems better than most of his so-called conscious contemporaries, analyzing with detail and wit how shit in a capitalist society always runs downhill. Factor in his formidable storytelling ability, best demonstrated on the already-classic track "Me and Jesus the Pimp in a '79 Granada Last Night," and it's clear that Riley isn't just a skilled sloganeer; he's an all-around MC who happens to be passionate about revolution.

*Pick a Bigger Weapon*, Boots' and his partner Pam the Funkstress' fifth album in their 14-year career, finds *The Coup* moving towards an all-encompassing sound, attempting to create a set of classic, intersecting grooves. Their first album since 2001's *Party Music* (and first for

punk stalwart Epitaph), *Weapon* was inspired by politics, but not in the way you'd expect. In 2003, *The Coup* went on the Bush-bashing "Tell Us the Truth" tour with artists like punk-folk icon Billy Bragg and Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello; the diverse lineup proved to be a big sonic influence. Morello, guitarist Dwayne Wiggins, and others lend their talents to the more eclectic *Pick a Bigger Weapon*, which builds on the Parliament/Funkadelic-inspired beats that formed the backbone of *Party Music*.

The Coup's newly expanded sound—minus a few songs with a slightly oddball tone—works for the most part; they add many interesting elements to the mix instead of revamping old beats. The solid opener, "Bullets and Love," filled with swirling synths and showy guitar riffs, has an Outkast flavor to it, while "MindFuck" flirts with Carlos Santana-style solos. The handclaps and harmonica strains floating over Boots' silky paean to spending all morning banging the headboards ("I Just Wanna Lay Around All Day in Bed With You") gradually builds to a string-laden conclusion. But as surprising as Riley's roguish R&B turn is, the track aimed squarely (though with

tongue in cheek) at blue-staters making babies is the soulful "BabyLet'sHaveABabyBeforeBush DoesSomethingCrazy," a collaboration with rapper Silk E. It's an over-the-top dose of humor with a cameo by Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra.

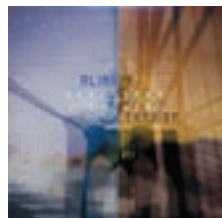
Boots maintains his usual lyrical edge, though he surprisingly spends little time referencing recent events like Iraq and Katrina. "We Are the Ones," which he delivers in a foppish tone, could be interpreted as a realistic look at the crack era that's been glamorized by many recent rappers. But most of the other tracks—like the anti-Uncle Tom "Ass-Breath Killers" and "MindFuck," a dark look at being dependent and following orders—find him again digging into the politics of everyday. "I'm here to laugh, love, fuck, and drink liquor/And help the damn revolution come quicker," he raps on "Laugh/Love/Fuck." It's not his edgiest statement, nor is the album the group's best work, but *Weapon* still sounds a powerful rallying cry. *Patrick Sisson*





**ISLANDS**  
**RETURN TO THE SEA**

Equator/CAN/CD  
Nick Diamonds and J'aime Tambour used to be two-thirds of The Unicorns, the Canadian bubblegum-psych band that drenched pop music in acid and sang spook songs about ghosts. But with The Corns disbanded, Diamonds and Tambour have reconvened under the name Islands and called in a few Montreal-based buddies the indie kids might recognize (Richard Reed Parry and Regine Chassagne of The Arcade Fire and Spencer Krug of Wolf Parade, just to name a few). The result is an immediately accessible, immediately endearing debut. Basically, *Return to the Sea* is the album that would have followed The Unicorns' *Who Will Cut Our Hair When You're Gone* if the original trio stretched their artistic arms. In its 11 tracks of epic pop, *Return* is a near seamless ride through weird-world hip-hop megalomania, symphonic extravagance, tiki-torch whimsy, and so, so much else. Bottom line is you won't have a better time in 2006. *Robbie Mackey*



**ALEX SMOKE**  
**PARADOLIA**

Soma/UK/CD  
Paradolia is the phenomenon of finding familiar images in random scenes, like faces in clouds or religious icons in root vegetables. By a comparable process, it's easy to pick out familiar motifs in Alex Menzies' music-making; throughout *Paradolia*, trace elements of other music released in the last 24 months or so on labels like Kompakt, Traum, Get Physical, Border Community, and, most pronouncedly, Ghostly International (via Matthew Dear's melodic, song-based techno) seem to teem from the speakers. Nevertheless, on the follow-up to *Incommunicado*, Menzies transcends mere homage; by surveying the micro- and electro-house scenes of 2004-05, he produces an album that might be among the more loveable of 2006. *David Hemingway*



**ALIAS & TARSIER**  
**BROOKLAND/OAKLYN**

Anticon/US/CD  
"I will not hate you, but I'll soon wear you down, down, down," sings Rona "Tarsier" Rapadas. Too bad I was already worn down after the album's opener, "Cub," a juvenile number where Tarsier sings about a little kid she saw on a train. OK, I'll be fair: producer Alias makes *decent* music here; he maintains an odd tension as

his gentle ballads, tinged with distortion and nimble hip-hop beats, seem to nearly collapse. The chaos is particularly palpable on "Luck and Fear," as labelmates Themselves interrupt the song with yammering influenced by CIA truth serum. But no matter how many tricks Alias has up his sleeve, Tarsier's lullaby voice is not strong enough to carry this record. *Cameron Macdonald*

**ELLEN ALLIEN + APPARAT**  
**ORCHESTRA OF BUBBLES**

Bpitch Control/GER/CD  
*Orchestra* is full of ace electro-house that beautifully pools the talents of Allien and Sascha Ring (Apparat) into sad melodies and strident, humanity-imbued rhythms. "Do Not Break" demands immediate breakdancing while the standout "Metric" resembles a Busta Rhymes joint pitted against a string symphony. If it weren't for "Leave Me Alone," where Ring's sports-bar pop croon better is suited to an after-school TV special about making the right choices about sex and homework, this record might've been a masterwork. *Cameron Macdonald*

**AZEEM**  
**CRAFT CLASSIC**

Oaklyn/US/CD  
Released during Dubya's first year in office, when the King and his court began plotting their imperial designs, this once out-of-print record still sounds relevant with tracks like "Bush is a Gangsta." Originally limited to 3,000 copies, the Oakland-based MC has re-mastered his full-length debut (minus three tracks), featuring some of the Bay's best hip-hop producers. Azeem attacks a beat like E-40 on a bender at a poetry reading, and cuts like the self-identity-dissecting "Imma Rmx," with its stream-of-consciousness flow, should impress the Def Poetry crowd. Unfortunately, Azeem discarded the prose poem "God's Rolex," but tracks like "Rubber Glue," where he plays a wack rapper, should have fans fiending for a new record—hopefully to hit before Bush's impeachment proceedings begin. *James Mayo*

**JOE BATAAN**  
**CALL MY NAME**

ESL/US/Download  
Originally released on the Spanish Vampi Soul imprint, the King of Latin Soul's 2005 comeback record, included in its entirety on this digital release, also gets the remix treatment from ESL's finest. Starting in the '60s, Harlem-bred Bataan merged Latin and R&B sounds to create hits like "Gypsy Woman." On his first record in 20 years, Bataan's soulful voice still sounds timeless over organ fills and Latin rhythms. Tracks like "Call My Name" indicate that the King kept his game tight while he was away raising his children and counseling juvenile offenders. The set closes with Ursula 1000's "Chevere Que Chevere" remix, a fine tribute to Bataan's early influence on hip-hop. *James Mayo*

**BIRDY NAM NAM**  
**BIRDY NAM NAM**

Uncivilized World/US/CD-DVD  
DMC World Team champs Birdy Nam Nam are a testament to the growth that can occur from true companionship. On their self-titled debut, the French team of Little Mike, DJ Pone, DJ Need, and Crazy B bustles through 17 tracks of forward-thinking, mind-bending instrumentals. Instead of overusing their obvious scratching talents, the four DJs take the high road. Soulfully digging through chilled-out funk breaks and non-sequitur sampling (yes, that is a dude taking a leak on "Kind of Laid Back"), Birdy Nam Nam matches technical wizardry with inimitable tone for a truly inspired turntablist hip-hop record. *Josiah Hughes*

**BOMBAY DUB ORCHESTRA**  
**BOMBAY DUB ORCHESTRA**

Six Degrees/US/CD  
Two Brits (Andrew Mackay and Gary Hughes) jet to India and, according to Six Degrees' publicity proclamations, "do something that hadn't been tried before—make the ultimate chill-out album by using an Indian orchestra and soloists." Um, tell that to Talvin Singh, Bally Sagoo, and Nitin Sawhney, producers who've utilized Indian strings and classical musicians throughout their multi-album careers. That grievance aside, there's always room for more electronic/dub/Asian efforts, especially fine two-disc sets like *BDO*. Disc one features misty melodic numbers with fluttering *bansuri* (flute) riffs like "Mumtaz," ideal for cinematic love scenes. The second piece takes eight songs from the first disc and adds languid beats and saturated echoes. *BDO* occasionally overreaches with grandiose engineering and chocolate-truffle-sweet arrangements—peak-time ambient, anyone? *Tomas Palermo*

**BOOKA SHADE**  
**MOVEMENTS**

Get Physical/GER/CD  
The title is presumably intended as a play on words, simultaneously referencing the Get Physical label and Booka Shade's own place in the scheme of scenes and trends. Featuring interpretations and album versions of Walter Merziger and Arno Kammermeier's crossover hits, "Body Language" and "Mandarine Girl," *Movements* was being dubbed an "important" album three months before its actual release. Thankfully, the long-player lives up to expectations, with the duo applying their dexterity as sound designers to their usual expansive tech-house; a technoid-disco take on Thai music; metallic, neo-Detroit techno; and, most unexpectedly, a convincing (deliberate) homage to Sigur Rós. The latter band isn't an obvious comparison point but Booka Shade shares with the Icelanders a keen sense of space and atmosphere, making *Movements* a joy. *David Hemingway*

**THE BUZZCOCKS**  
**FLAT-PACK PHILOSOPHY**

Cooking Vinyl/US/CD  
*Flat-Pack* is straight-ahead, no-frills punk rock, and despite some flashier studio effects and cleaner playing, The Buzzcocks' energy is still there, nearly as compelling as it was 30 years ago. Founding members Pete Shelley and Steve Diggle seem to understand that sometimes it's better to be who you are than try to catch up with the times; they stick to their guns and come out blazing, with social commentary on everything from corporate culture to Orwell to, of course, love and relationships. Their willingness to show emotions other than anger is what classed them above so many of their contemporaries in the past, and it continues to do so today. *Alexander Posell*

**CACHEFLOWE**  
**AUTOMATE EVERYTHING**

Nobot Media/US/CD  
So much for subtlety. From the jump-off, *Automate Everything* is all stutters and tip-toeing explosions. Justin Gitlin, CacheFlowe's brain trust, wears his breakbeat pedigree on his sleeve, navigating between funky stammers and epileptic stumbles with a beautiful disregard for delicacy. Like a doped-up Prefuse 73, sick of computer burps, or a safer Squarepusher with less quirk and a bit more urban sass, Gitlin creates a fitful—if fairly uninventive—glitch-hop automaton of a disc. *Robbie Mackey*

**CURRENT 93**  
**HOW HE LOVED THE MOON (MOONSONGS FOR JHONN BALANCE)**

Beta-Lactam Ring/US/CD  
While Current 93 has morphed from monolithic terror to majestic spirituality from album to album, David Tibet and consistent contributor Steven Stapleton (Nurse With Wound) beckon the dark side with *How He Loved the Moon*. An homage to the late Jhonn Balance of Coil, this two-disc set drones through a remixed version of the early Current 93 album *In Menstrual Night*. With a host of players (including Balance himself), this post-industrial ode to a beloved friend resurrects the essence of a group of true artists pushing through creative boundaries, all while scaring the living hell out of you. *Fred Miketa*

**DALMINJO**  
**ONE DAY YOU'LL DANCE FOR ME TOKYO**

Deeplay/SWE/CD  
Norwegian producer Ole Roar Granli's passionate, desperate cover of The Smiths' "There is a Light That Never Goes Out" sets a tone for all 10 tracks on this album: pretty, fun to listen to, but largely stripped of meaning. Not that the album, Dalminjo's sophomore effort, isn't enjoyable; it's just that it doesn't go deeper than that. The tracks, leaning toward downtempo and deep house, would mostly do well on the dancefloor, but none would be the standout track you go to the record store dying to find. Ear candy: tasty, but devoid of nutritional content. *Luciana Lopez*

**DAT POLITICS**  
**WOW TWIST**

Chicks On Speed/GER/CD  
With *Wow Twist*, French trio DAT Politics has devolved into the kiddie-kitsch clowns some feared they would become, even during their best records. Over five previous albums, DAT Politics' madcap glitch-pop ditties often teetered on the edge of absurdity. Mostly, the group charmingly placed their tooth-decay melodies within thrillingly kinetic song structures and topped them with enough flagrantly nutty and bizarre tones to keep *Clicks & Cuts* brainiacs beaming. *Wow Twist*, however, is excessively goofy (helium-voiced cutesiness, rubbed-balloon squeals galore, trite tunes) and it only makes you wish for the reformation of Tone Rec, DAT Politics' earlier post-rock unit. *Dave Segal*

**DJ DREZ**  
**JAHTA BEAT**

Say It Loud/US/CD  
For LA's DJ Drez, hip-hop isn't just about the boom-baps or the throwbacks—what's important are the rare grooves that went into hip-hop's creation, the reggae that preceded and paralleled the music's growth, and the myriad beats that inform the culture's sound. So, for his self-produced and mixed *Jahta Beat*, Drez dug into source sounds from North Africa, India, and the Bronx to create tracks that buzz with sitar and tabla as much as the funk drop. But *Jahta* comes across more like a world-y chill-out mix, with at least one generic "Eastern" moment for each genuinely interesting fusion. *Justin Hopper*

**DUB TRACTOR**  
**HIDEOUT**

City Centre Offices/GER/CD  
Moving beyond the constraints and classifications of the electronic realm, Anders Remmer goes post-everything with his latest album. From the soothing static pulse of "Five 6" to the fairy-dusted dubbery of "I'm Like You," *Hideout* ebbs and flows with a superb fusion of basement-band instrumentation, daydreamy folktronics, and deliciously reverberant textures that softly melt all linear thought patterns. Each song unfolds gradually, taking its time to explore the nuances of every fuzzy, minimal melody and downshifted cadence through the warmth of Remmer's rich, granular production. If this is lo-fi, you may never want to be high again. *Doug Morton*



**MURS**  
**MURRAY'S REVENGE**

Record Collection/US/CD  
These days, finding a talented MC with zero interest in a major label deal is like going to a Diddy party with no Cristal. Luckily for hip-hop fans, Living Legends' frontman Murs shrugs off commercial intrigue yet again. *Revenge* finds this 13-year indie hustler in a storytelling mood: Each joint offers stilled snapshots of Murs' life, crystallizing moments that feel both candid and personal. His love for LL Cool J's relaxed thug-style flows through *Revenge*, especially in the affectionate, rosy-hued memories of familial love ("Love & Appreciate") and the thoughts of a young man first startled by violence ("Dreamchasers"). Producer 9th Wonder's '70s soul casts a warm, soft glow onto Murs' prickly lyrical prowess, turning *Revenge* into something bittersweet. It's like Murs observes on "Murs Day," "It don't take much these days to master the mic/Most of the rappers trapped in the hype." Be glad Murs won't make the MTV rounds anytime soon. *Janet Tzou*



**DUB TRIO  
NEW HEAVY**

Roir/US/CD

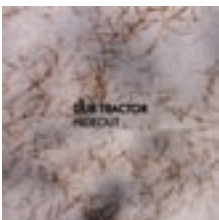
While the mingling of rock and dub dates back to punk rastas like The Clash and Bad Brains, it's been less than successful in most experiments. Enter New York-based Dub Trio, whose phenomenal live show has translated to a record well worth the wait. The rock-influenced, predominantly instrumental *New Heavy* is capped by the brilliant "Not Alone," where guest Mike Patton shares epic growls rarely heard since his days in Faith No More. As for the remaining 35 minutes, Dub Trio proves that their move from backing musicians to a full-on ensemble was only a matter of time. *Derek Beres*



**EDU K  
FRENÉTIKO**

Man Recordings/US/CD

As frontman of Brazilian punk group Defalla, over-caffeinated, heavily tattooed, leather-panted Edu K became one of the first to champion Rio's then-underground *baile funk* movement. Since then, Edu K has gone on to join the ranks of *baile's* world-renowned booty-bass culture and take that relentless beat forward with his guitar-punked take on the ultra-hyped sound. *Frenético* takes *baile funk's* main ingredients—thunderous Miami-style bass, simple 808 beats, gang-chanted Portuguese vocals, New Wave-y synth lines—and extends them illogically with street-punk guitars and shouts. The result is a record ready for the new dance craze: slam grinding. *Justin Hopper*



**ELLAY KHULE  
CALIFORMULA**

Decon/US/CD

Ellay Khule (a.k.a. Rifleman) has never been the most publicized member of LA's Project Blowed collective, yet he carries one of the crew's most distinctive flows—a lightning-fast, "chop-hop" style. His new album, *Califormula*, may be the most thorough showcase of his skills thus far, and he's in good hands with forward-thinking Angelenos Omid and Nobody manning the boards. Despite his accelerated verbal speed, it's never too difficult to make out his ever-conscious dialect. While his style might be too wild for some, fans of the LA underground and Project Blowed are bound to love it. *Max Herman*

**EULORHYTHMICS  
EXTENDED PLAY**

All Natural/US/CD

Rap duo Eulorhythmics (Adad and Kenny Keys) creeps up on listeners, sneaking up like a beam of sunlight peeking over the windowsill on a weekend morning. But that isn't to say they're pussyfooting around on *Extended Play*; Adad kicks verses over Keys' soul-slatthered, slow-starting beats, which gradually percolate, sounding funky and like a less-symphonic Foreign Exchange. Adad's lyrics can sometimes sound like he's rubbing the sleep out of his eyes—his flow is buoyant, bouncing over standard-issue beats, but it's also filled with standard-issue wordplay. With tighter lyrics, this disc could really make a mark. *Patrick Sisson*

**FUNCTION  
THE SECRET MIRACLE FOUNTAIN**

Locust/US/CD

Form seems to trump function on *The Secret Miracle Fountain*, as Matthew Liam Nicholson and company build 16 pretty-but-flawed, statuesque songs that reach skyward with solemnity. Yes, the sonic architecture of Nicholson's second Function venture is inventive and inspiring—it took three years and three dozen musicians to create—but these grim monuments collapse under their own humorlessness and austerity way before they run their proper course. Hushed, synth-bandaged electronics burble and glisten, washes of noise tumble over themselves and vanish into thin air, but ultimately the staid sonics prove imposing and dour. *Robbie Mackey*

**GOTAN PROJECT  
LUNATICO**

Beggars Banquet/US/CD

The vocals of Calexico—the female singer, not the band—on *Lunatico's* opener, "Amor Porteño," instantly transport the listener to *La Revancha del Tango*, Gotan Project's near-million-selling debut. The Argentinean trio makes a slight return before launching into bigger basslines and more twisted tango than before, making them crowned beasts of the *bandoneon*. The reggae-tinged upbeat of "Notas" and the club-anthem "Diferente" are certain to invade as many global comps as the debut. The lush interplay between floating piano and accordion lines along warm bass notes solidifies Gotan as one of the most inventive, inviting world/electronic projects out there. *Lunatico*, indeed. *Derek Beres*

**KIERAN HEBDEN AND STEVE REID  
THE EXCHANGE SESSION VOL. 1**

Domino/UK/CD

Following a short series of completely improvised performances in Europe, Kieran Hebden (a.k.a. Four Tet) and legendary jazzman Steve Reid headed straight into the studio, and this is the exciting result. "Experimental" doesn't begin to describe what these two create by coupling Reid's drumming with Hebden's electronic wizardry, which was all done on the spot, without any post-production sequencing. Four Tet fans be warned: This is a considerable departure for an already progressive instrumentalist. Nevertheless the three lengthy, free-flowing "exchanges" between Hebden and Reid do not cease to fascinate, even if they can become a bit hectic. *Max Herman*

**ISOLÉE  
WESTERN STORE**

Playhouse/GER/CD

It's hard to resist comparing this latest release to Isolée's wildly impressive *WeAreMonster*, but fortunately, the Germany producer's new album stands on its own. Though it is by definition minimal, with bleeps and crunches aplenty, a wealth of subtle layers keep it from being just another techno album. Melody builds upon melody, the 4/4 shuffle makes an appearance, and there are even a few power chords woven into this tapestry, making for a collection as musically intense as it is soothing. *Jennifer Marston*

**GREGG KOWALSKY  
THROUGH THE CARDIAL WINDOW**

Kranky/US/CD

Oakland's Gregg Kowalsky has quite a penchant for creating engaging noise and ambient compositions. *Through the Cardial Window* barrels through a buzz of minimal feedback, ghostly cymbal swells, and decadent build-ups that capture life's most tumultuous times. Often ubiquitously serene and ravenously heavy at the same time, the Mills College MFA graduate employs a dense amount of textural techniques, from filtering his work through an acoustic guitar pickup to reworking source material from the brutal ambiance of the band Isis. From beginning to end, Kowalsky's potent blend of feedback loops and psychedelic chiming leaves you feeling medicated and breathless. *Fred Miketa*

**MASSIVE ATTACK  
COLLECTED**

Virgin/UK/CD

As a teaser to the Bristol group's upcoming fifth album, this package of highlights spanning their 16-year career is right on time. The seductively spooky "trip-hop" genre Robert Del Naja and his collaborators helped to create remains a defining sound of the '90s; but that term doesn't begin to sum up the influence of decades of soul music lurking in Massive albums from *Blue Lines* to 2003's *100th Window*. Their new single, "Live With Me" (featuring Terry Callier), is included on the first disc of band-picked favorites (as well as tracks like "Karmacoma" and "Unfinished Sympathy"). Disc two hits and misses with simmering, unreleased tracks and so-so soundtrack tunes, but its flipside offers every MA video to date. *Rachel Shimp*

**MEXICAN INSTITUTE OF SOUND  
MÉJICO MÁXICO**

Nacional/US/CD

From the heart of Mexico City comes a touching, sweet audio-collage of a release from Camilo Lara (a.k.a. MIS). Presented almost in sketch form—many of the tunes are under two minutes—the album fuses bits of *cumbia* and *mambo* with simple drum programming, dub effects, and keyboards reminiscent of early Luke Vibert or David Holmes (if he'd ended up in Mexico City instead of New York). While not terribly groundbreaking, the album's charm grows with repeated listening and it's a testament to the depth of Mexico's music scene that Nacional's electronic roster reaches well beyond Nortec. *Matt Earp*

**MISS YETI  
INSIGHTS**

Gold und Liebe Tonträger/GER/CD

Former Cologne resident Henrietta Schermal combines music-making with the study of psychology, simultaneously drawing influence from social science *and* the likes of Jörg Burger, Reinhard Voigt, and Michael Mayer. Now relocated to Berlin, Yeti runs Gold und Liebe while working on a doctoral thesis about musical taste and personality traits. Not surprisingly, the slightly dated *Insights*—which is overtly inspired by Electronic Body Music—plays like an intellectual exercise for the dancefloor; its tracks frequently seem constructed more for sheer physicality than emotional impact. *David Hemingway*

**MOCKY  
NAVY BROWN BLUES**

Four Music/GER/CD

Electro, R&B, hip-hop, nu-jazz—Mocky's *Navy Brown Blues* doesn't win medals in any individual events, but in the decathlon of contemporary soulful electro sounds, he takes the gold. If it weren't for Mocky's loving sincerity on "Animal," with its Bee Gees-quoting lyrics flowed over electro-cheese grooves, the track could've been a parody; elsewhere, he references geekiness from Brian Eno to Michael Caine to having the Three Tenors as his ringtone with equally appreciable seriousness. But whether it's bedroom-eyes '80s R&B (the title track) or driving, post-Cameo floor-packers like "Extended Vacation," Mocky's onto something good—and *Navy* is almost there. *Justin Hopper*

**MONO  
YOU ARE THERE**

Temporary Residence/US/CD

On several previous albums, Japanese instrumental quartet Mono (not to be confused with the trip-hoppy London duo of the same name) laid to tape caustic howls straining against mercurial shimmers. 2003's *Walking Cloud and Deep Red Sky, Flag Fluttered and the Sun Shined* balanced nuanced bursts of resolute catharsis and pensive stretches. Now the group has recorded alkaline pleas for clemency that both froth

and sob. The tape hiss captured by Steve Albini in the more contemplative passages conjures an intense intimacy, like the downy rustling of eyelids batting like butterfly wings in an auditorium, and *You Are There* lives up to the name. Like Isis and Neurosis, Mono captures a voluminous immediacy, an affirming, searing air. *Tony Ware*

**MR. VELCRO FASTENER  
TELEMACHO**

Stars Music/GER/CD

Electro is alive and well thanks to outfits like Finland's Mr. Velcro Fastener, a band who continues to build on old school-inspired foundations. A superbly programmed record, *Telemacho* presents a spectral array of moods, drawing elements of dub ("Housin' With the T's"), IDM ("Skip Intro"), and classic tech-house ("Muurame") into their core. Armed additionally with a host of deadly beat-boxers ("By Your Command") and deep-space electro numbers ("Silent Running"), *Telemacho* completely submerges the late-night set, cementing a place in public and private rotation for years to come. *Doug Morton*

**MS. JOHN SODA  
NOTES AND THE LIKE**

Morr Music/GER/CD

During the beginning of "No. One," Ms. John Soda singer Stefanie Böhm tediously counts off as Micha Acher strums textbook bass riffs, sounding more clinically depressed than catchy. It's one of many examples of the colder, drier mood that swirls around the duo's sophomore full-length album. On their 2002 debut, this tag-team knocked out glitchy pop, trimming the sound of labelmates like The Notwist into angular, occasionally aggressive hooks augmented by Böhm's alternately monotone and cooing vocals. The familiar but more sparse *Notes and the Like* boils things down



**JOHANNES HEIL  
FREAKS R US**

Klang Elektronik/GER/CD

When it comes to techno knowledge and execution, German producer Johannes Heil is a man with a towering IQ. Or maybe that should be Eye Q, having collaborated with Eye Q label owner Sven Väth. Heil's aesthetic from his work with producers like Väth and DJ Hell (and his tracks on Harthouse, a label known for meticulously orchestrated prog-tech) is obvious on *Freaks R Us*, a survey of styles. Braided and abraded bass burrows throughout—such as on "Warrior of Light" and the latter half of the title track—drawing parallels to both Tiefschwarz/Black Strobe and Dave Clarke/Robert Armani. "Rescue Me" and "Tree of Life," especially, feature unsettled narratives, the likes of which will leave Green Velvet fans quivering. Whether the drums are straitjacketed or jacking, the cleanly edited momentum is unforgiving. Undoubtedly, there's something for everyone to enjoy on *Freaks R Us*, whether you're into Laibach or LFO, Detroit or Chicago, micro-goth or Minus. *Tony Ware*



**BEAT PHARMACY  
CONSTANT PRESSURE**

Deep Space Media/US/CD

Beat Pharmacy's Brendon Moeller has learned from digital dub's past indiscretions by severely limiting his output (one album and three singles precede this release) and expertly mixing his sonic cocktail. *Constant Pressure* sounds unlike other established (and often mundane) digital dub acts. Rhythm & Sound vocalist Paul St. Hillaire appears on "Hot Spot Splash," which rumbles like a classic '70s Wackies stepper cut, rather than a Burial Mix tech-dub rip off. 4/4 rhythms punctuate *Pressure*, as house, jazz, and ambient influences share equal hits off the chalice. Dub poet Mutabaruka's throaty pronouncements haunt the minimal "Wata," while "Slow Down" and "Rat Race" are swirling, somnolent dubs for mental magic carpet rides. Fill your prescription at this Pharmacy and you'll forget all the digital dung your ears previously absorbed. *Tomas Palermo*



even further, dulling down the duo's edge. Unfortunately, the new tunes lack the necessary spark to stick in your head. *Patrick Sisson*

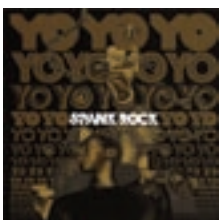
**NIGHTMARES ON WAX  
IN A SPACE OUTTA SOUND**  
Warp/UK/CD

If it's not yet summer where you live, producer/DJ George Evelyn's latest will have you vibing like it is without leaving your house. As with his chill-out classics *Smoker's Delight* and *Carboot Soul*, the feeling-real-good strains of funky, spacey hip-hop permeate *In A Space* like velvety-sweet smoke. A bit predictable and slow at the outset, the Caribbean dub of "Flip Ya Lid" and dreamy Middle Eastern patina of "Damn" pick up the pace nicely. Hazy, languid vocals on "Me!" and "Soul Purpose" keep things engaging and fluid. If it sounds tired, you've been sleeping too long—Evelyn's still weaving pleasant dreams. *Rachel Shimp*



**NO MOVEMENT NO SOUND NO MEMORIES  
REMOVED/ACETATE**  
Lux Nigra/GER/CD

All cut up, with rips and tears in its sonic fabric, this is a great, challenging, darkly complex release from a superb label. A combination of two EPs (one early, one just released), dub, techno, and noise collide and then get run through the abstract filters of the remixers, ranging from Pole's soft whispers to Modeselektor's harder edge. Youngman and Kool Pop's Something J cut up tech-hop, Arovane lends trademark beauty, James Din A4 serves up bounce, and the whole thing gets wrapped in soft gauze, evoking the feeling you'd get looking at a blank Berlin winter sky. *Matt Earp*



**THE PRESETS  
BEAMS**  
Modular/AUST/CD

The Presets is the heady dancefloor project of Australians Julian Hamilton and Kimberley Moyes, who met while studying theory and music performance at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. *Beams*, the duo's anticipated debut, is a broad but always danceable effort. From the dark-wave distortion of "Down Down Down" to the melodic synths of "Black Background," the record covers a lot of ground, and is tied together by the album's cinematic closer and title track. Their sound could use a little more focus, but *Beams* is still a respectable beginning for a promising group. *Josiah Hughes*

**THE ROGERS SISTERS  
THE INVISIBLE DECK**  
Too Pure/US/CD

The Rogers Sisters (actually two sisters and one unrelated male) play solid, party-starting Brooklyn rock with a melodic slant; great stuff for either a booze-drenched Williamsburg bar or a hang session at home with your pals. Having taken a more song-oriented direction from previous outings, *Deck* covers a wider sonic palette, delving deeper into emotional territory while remaining dissonant and danceable throughout. And while the lead single, "Never Learn to Cry," may have critics rehashing hackneyed Gang of Four comparisons, moodier fare like "Your Littlest World" will find your head feeling as inspired as your feet. *Alexander Posell*

**SÃO PAULO UNDERGROUND  
SAUNA: UM, DOIS, TRÊS**  
Aesthetics/US/CD

Rob Mazurek (Chicago Underground Duo/Trio, Isotope 217) teams up with Brazilian drummer/trumpeter/programmer Mauricio Takara (from the jazzy instrumental rock band Hurtmold) for this noisy, experimental project. The title track doesn't divulge the duo's post-rock leanings, but they're slightly hinted at on the Afrobeat-fueled "Afrihouse" and "Pombaral," telling pieces of this landscape soundtrack that translate the sounds of the tumultuous metropolis into music. *Bruno Natal*

**MIKE SHANNON  
POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS TO STORIES THAT NEVER END**  
~scape/GER/CD

In Mike Shannon's "Remembrance," vocalist Anais walks through the streets and mourns past summer rains. A stranger follows, cracking the earth with each step in a dub rhythm. It's only one moment in a record full of ominous vibes, one that finds the Canadian techno producer fusing noir jazz, rickety digital-dub, and hallucinatory field recordings (i.e. snippets of newscasters morphing into rainfall). *Possible Conclusions* is haunted by an overall sense that somebody is looking over your shoulder but will not touch you just yet. *Cameron Macdonald*

**SOUL POSITION  
THINGS GO BETTER WITH RJ AND AL**  
Rhymesayers/US/CD

Contrary to Sade, sometimes it truly is as good as the first time—which is a smartass way of saying that the RJD2 and Blueprint team-up known as Soul Position is paying off quick-style. Blueprint's riotous rap on "I Need My Minutes" will provoke laughter in remembrance of the equally hilarious but truth-speaking "Fuckajob" (off their last effort, *8 Million Stories*), and RJ's production is as diverse and head-bob-inducing as ever. Like Blueprint explains on the release's second track, "No Gimmicks," Soul Position is invested in beating the shit out of mediocre hip-hop. *Scott Thill*

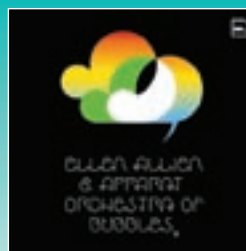
**SPANK ROCK  
YOYOYOYOYO**  
Big Dada/UK/CD

Like a Pixar skin flick narrated by Q-Tip, Spank Rock is concurrently cartoonish and commanding. There's just something unrelentingly bulbous about *YoYoYoYoYo*, the debut full-length by the BMore-meets-lladelph-founded, New York-grounded duo of MC Naeem "Spank Rock" Juwan and producer Alex "Armani" XXXchange (augmented at times by Chris Rockswell and Amanda Blank). At a nasal, pneumatic clip, Juwan gets Phlthy, dropping that Booty-more-spitting raunch from the haunch over 8-bit-meets-808 beats and Speak 'N Spell cut-ups that border on grimy breakstep. *YoYoYoYoYo* is yayo for those who want to simultaneously articulate, palpitate, and salivate. *Tony Ware*



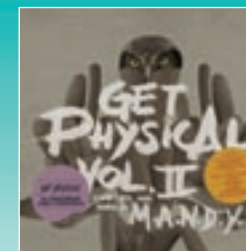
**MILOSH  
MEME**  
Plug Research/US/CD

"It's over... it's over," begins the first song of Mike Milosh's new album, his sadness evident from the start. The bittersweet lament of Milosh's multilayered vocal harmonies are tinged with an approaching sense of hope; the notion that while the loss of love brings with it indescribable pain, the chance for romantic rebirth waits in the wings. These are the themes of Milosh's last two albums, chronicling his adoration for and eventual breakup with a previous girlfriend. *Meme* sees Milosh moving on, discovering and exploring a new love. He draws us in on the gossamer threads of his voice, spinning his tale over a bed of percolating electronics and gently strobing synths that call to mind Telefon Tel Aviv or the majority of Morr Music's roster; a nice set of slow jams for shoe gazers and IDM kids alike. *Brock Phillips*



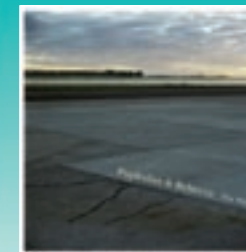
**ELLEN ALLIEN & APPARAT  
Orchestra of Bubbles CD/2LP**

One of the most highly-anticipated releases of 2006 streets May 2nd. **Apparat**, **Shitkatapult** co-owner, teams with the grand dame of fashionable techno, the B in BPitch, **Ellen Allien**. CD/2LP revised with two unleased bonus tracks, while the 12s get remixed by **Wighnomy Brothers**, **Jackson (Warp)**, **Pier Bucci**, **Marc Houle**, etc. This much is clear: 2006 = BPITCH.



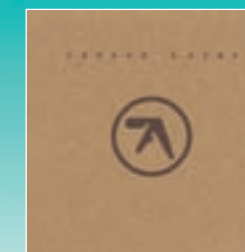
**M.A.N.D.Y.  
Get Physical Vol. II CD**

To celebrate its fourth year, **Get Physical** shows why *DJ Mag* named it **Label of the Year 2005**. 23 cuts from **Booka Shade**, **DJ T.**, **Chelonis R. Jones**, **Tiga** & **Jesper Dählback**, **Luciano**, **Joakim**, **Troy Pierce**, etc., etc. Of course it includes Ibiza track of the season winner "Body Language." Mixed by 10-year veterans **M.A.N.D.Y.**, it is completely off the chain.



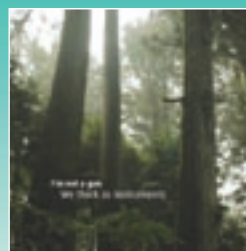
**PUPKULIES + REBECCA  
The Way We CD**

Cape Verdean techno meets a voice pulled from the ether while the swing seeps through and radiates a nonchalance and deep warmth. Similar in many ways to **Herbert** & **Dani Siciliano**, **Janosch Baul** and **Rebecca** make a weapon of subtlety: staking out your stereo, raiding it and keeping it in their control for money. The next level in the session-style **cool techno** sound of the day.



**AFX  
Chosen Lords CD**

The master returns April 18th. A specially-distilled compilation from the vinyl-only Analord series, *Chosen Lords* is the **Aphex Twin** (**Richard D. James**) at the peak of his powers and in the prime of his life. "Analord is Aphex Twin doing what he does best... you pity his peers." — 4/5 **Uncut**



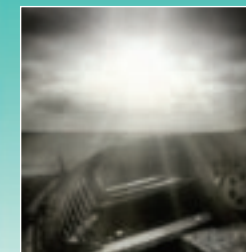
**I'M NOT A GUN  
We Think As Instruments CD/LP**

**John Tejada** is more than "Sweat" or "Paranoia," more than just a prolific techno producer: Tejada is a musician. **Takeshi Nishimoto** is also, especially armed with his custom-made 7-string guitar. This is the third album from their temporal, soulful and highly-underrated instrumental project that melds intensely complex drum programming with fluid, delicious composition.



**AMSTERDAM KLEZMER BAND  
Remixed CD**

Ethnic club music is storming the dancefloors of Europe. **Balkan beats**, **Rio baile funk** and now **Klezmer Beat**. Here, from the label that does all that and more, is the **Amsterdam Klezmer Band**... *Remixed*. International Bucovina superstar **Shantel** joins in alongside **Stefan Schmid** and **DJ Yuri Guhzy**. Seven original tracks, too. Klezmer Beat boogie.



**SICKOAKES  
Seawards CD**

New white-hot Swede sound from the always reliable **Type Records**. Somewhere between **Mogwai** and **Morricone**. "Those who've heard **Götsching's** classic *E2-E4 album* will have no trouble recognizing certain patterns of similarity. And those who swear by the last two **Talk Talk** and **Mark Hollis** solo LPs will find a group who understood their designs on space and minimalism." — **Dusted**



**LIZZY MERCIER DESCLOUX  
Best Off CD**

A special introduction to the sound of a special artist. Books could be written about **Lizzy Mercier Descloux**, her life with **Patti Smith** in NYC, her time with **Chet Baker** in Rio, her time as a correspondent for *Rock News*. *Best Off* is the most riveting of her work: worldbeat, discordant punk, celebratory no-wave, boisterous and Latin-infused funk. A joyful, 21-song celebration.



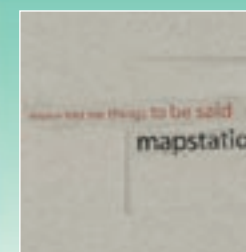
**KAITO  
Hundred Million Light Years CD/12"**

The "nu-trance" sound (see Border Community) has a friend in the immensely talented **Hiroshi Watanabe**. Born to a composer and a jazz pianist, **Watanabe** (aka **Kaito**) is one of Japan's most beloved electronic acts. He fully embraces classic '90s **trance euphoria** and **Kompakt's** trademark **minimal style**. Music-becomes-feeling. MDMA to the ears. Get lost inside Kaito.



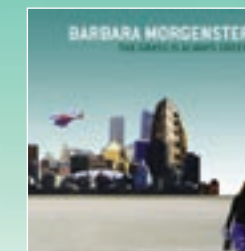
**BOOKA SHADE  
Movements CD**

**Booka Shade** (Walkter Merziger and Arno Kammermeier) see the pop future. Coated in Detroit velvet, laced with bittersweet melody and drenched in bass. *Movements* is the follow-up to the smash *Momento* ("Best album of the year." — **Stylus Magazine**) and further develops the duo's rich, developed sound. An album for the ages.



**MAPSTATION  
Distance Told Me Things To Be Said CD/LP**

**Mapstation** is **Stefan Schneider**. Produced between London, Berlin and Düsseldorf, *Distance* features a London trombonist (**Annie Whitehead**), a Viennese trio (**Radian**) and plenty of electronic sounds. 303 basslines, drum machines and percussion fit into delightful phrases. "Mapstation has been continually releasing grade-a music." — **Boomkat.com**



**BARBARA MORGENSTERN  
The Grass Is Always Greener CD/LP**

This is the long-awaited fifth full-length solo album from Berlin's queen of fragile and poetic **electro-pop** — now introducing the piano. It's three years since **Barbara Morgenstern's** acclaimed album *Nichts Muss*, and as *The Grass Is Always Greener* goes to show, she has come a long way. "[She] reconnects folkish intimacy with digital detachment." — **XLR8R**

**SWAYZAK**  
**ROUTE DE LA SLACK**

!K7/US/CD  
James Taylor (not that one) and David Brown's 13-year collaboration in minimal techno is captured on this two-disc retrospective set. The first disc—exclusively remixes—proves more interesting than the second. Swayzak's takes on Señor Coconut, Quark, and the Rasta-tinged downbeat of Systemwide far outweigh the more tech-heavy intonations of lesser cuts, like the overly electronic versions of Will Saul's "Tic Toc" and Slam's "Human." Disc two focuses on rarities, and while these tracks are admittedly more driving (much like Swayzak's stellar live performances), they offer less depth and fewer angles than the remixes. *Derek Beres*

**TANYA MORGAN**  
**MOONLIGHTING**

Loud Minority Music/US/CD  
On *Moonlighting*, Brooklyn/Cincinnati hip-hop crew Tanya Morgan (an all-male trio) sets out to convince listeners not to judge a book—er, CD—by its cover. Is the music behind all the masquerading worth checking out, though? For the most part, yes. These guys are as quick to clown as A Tribe Called Quest circa *People's Instinctive Travels*, and their lighthearted vibe makes for some entertaining listening. Of course, their soulful and hard-hitting production doesn't hurt either. While their rhymes can be heavy on complaints, they make sure to keep them comical; the proof is in the hilarious anti-thug rap anthem "Rough It Up." *Max Herman*



I:CUBE

**I:CUBE**  
**LIVE AT THE PLANETARIUM**

Versatile/FRA/CD  
I:Cube has been simmering just below the surface of the French house scene for some time now, keeping himself a bit mysterious while flipping from Metro Area-style electronic funk to loopy techno-IDM to collaborations with Wu-Tang patriarch RZA. Here, I:Cube revisits the mid-1990s ambient explosion in eight untitled tracks that immediately envelop the listener in the kind of evocative, flowing sound galaxies once crafted by Global Communication and Aphex Twin. Created for the Starball Festival at the La Villette Planetarium in France, *Live at the Planetarium* is perhaps best suited for iPod-enabled stargazing, as the gentle drifts into dub and house beats serve to bridge the gaps between sampled chants and low-key glitches. If Pink Floyd is the thrasher's planetarium soundtrack of choice, I:Cube will be the raver's option for those nights spent way, way outside the club. *Rob Geary*

**TERRESTRIAL TONES**  
**DEAD DRUNK**

Paw Tracks/US/CD  
**TAKAGI MASAKATSU**  
**JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE**  
Carpark/US/CD-DVD  
*Dead Drunk* is a collaboration of temporal ruptures and textural raptures between Black Dice's Eric Copeland and Animal Collective's Avey Tare (Dave Portner). With its tweaked-to-hell voices stereo-panned into a grotesquerie of mutant electronics, Terrestrial Tones' third album recalls Black Dice's beatless, diabolically surreal passages on *Broken Ear Record*. *Dead Drunk* is one of the queasiest bad-trip experiences to which you'll ever quiver. By contrast, Takagi Masakatsu's second Carpark CD/DVD paddles in the shallows of IDM: childlike-wonder division. He submerges sedately beautiful Debussy-esque piano meditations in pastel watercolor daubs, and then gently glitches up the sound field. In 2006, this is a quaint *modus operandi*, but Takagi executes it well. *Dave Segal*

**T-KASH**  
**TURF WAR SYNDROME**

Guerilla Funk/US/CD  
The album's title sounds like something Three 6 Mafia might release, yet its content is surprisingly thought-provoking. Dispensing with most, if not all, of the clichés of gangsta or turf rap, T-Kash—a former Coup member and current protégé of Paris—absolutely flips the script with one of the hardest-hitting political rap albums ever to come from the West Coast. Whether it's jacking Nate Dogg hooks and trading misogyny for cheery-eyed rebellion, reworking "Shook Ones" as a revolutionary anthem, explaining "How to Get Ass(assinated)," or breaking down the socioeconomics behind "a psychological Hurricane Katrina," T-Kash maintains both a street-level perspective and a conscious mentality, and does both with lyrical finesse. *Eric K. Arnold*

**TOTAL SCIENCE**  
**MARS NEEDS TOTAL SCIENCE**

CIA/UK/CD  
Oxford's Q-Project and Spinback, better known to the D&B world as Total Science, have been twisting styles and dropping timeless anthems for over a decade. Returning from a part-time residency in Philadelphia, PA, the duo releases their fourth album with more dancefloor killas like "Never Had a Dream" and "Squash" (Gridlok Remix), but drip their Philly soul experience with syrupy nu-jazz numbers like "Wasting Time," featuring Little Brother's Phonte and the J Dilla-esque "Vibe." *Mars Needs Total Science* is the boys' most adventurous album to date, but not their most cohesive one. *Ryan Romana*

**UGLY DUCKLING**  
**BANG FOR THE BUCK**

Fat Beats/US/CD  
I'm always down to hear a rap album that doesn't make me want to take my earrings off and grab a jar of Vaseline. Many alternative-rap artists confuse being different with being good; fortunately, that's not the case with Ugly Duckling. This album isn't defined by how "not like" everything else is it. Clever lyrics and funky uptempo tracks distinguish the SoCal trio from the pack on their latest release. The standout track "The Breakdown" is aggressive by UG standards but more amusing and danceable than most of what's out there. *Sabrina Ford*

**UP HYGH**  
**THE VENUS ALBUM**

Jugglin/SWE/CD  
Swedish production duo Up Hygh may swing like galactic soul stirrers Sa-Ra, PPP, and the tragically departed J Dilla, but these Northern cats ain't no cheap Wal-Mart knock-offs; they're competent hip-hop heads having intimate relations with fat analog basslines. Like a ride on a potholed Brooklyn parkway after ingesting a fifth of Henny, Hygh's beats swerve, skid, and weave but never stray from their harmonic asphalt. "Get Out My Face" features singer Melo invoking Stevie Wonder as robust, layered vocals compliment funky, topsy-turvy drum patterns. Bas-1, Planet Asia, and friends fill in the gaps with energetic raps over clipped synths and handclap-saturated beats that sound like Rick James and Zapp records thrown in a concrete mixer. *Tomas Palermo*

**ZERO CROSSING**  
**MY KINDA FUNK**

Perfect Toy/GER/CD  
Bavarian-born Andreas Angerer (a.k.a. Zero Crossing) has an aptly named debut album, as the tracks are more his interpretation of what funk is than an accurate representation of it. We couldn't be happier about this, because instead of a predictable 15 tracks we get numbers that shift between two-step, grime, electro, disco, and even have time for a few guest appearances by the likes of Kool Keith and Jaymz Nylon, making for one of the most musically colorful debuts to surface in a while. *Jennifer Marston*

**EUPHORIA**

precious time

Featuring:  
"Back Against the Wall"  
"Blue" — with Tina Dico  
"Precious Time" — with Tracy Bonham

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TIM GOLDSWORTHY & JAMES MURPHY

**THE DFA REMIXES: CHAPTER ONE**

Astralwerks/US/CD

Having risen from the shadows of the indie scene to the iPods of every hipster in the country in 2005, a collection of dance edits seemed the inevitable next step for DFA masterminds James Murphy and Tim Goldsworthy. Perhaps the real strength here is not so much the production work, but the duo's ability to choose tracks that translate well into dance numbers. The power chords and spasmodic vocals on Blues Explosion's "Mars Arizona" seem to have been written with a 4/4 beat in mind, while mainstream numbers from The Chemical Brothers and Gorillaz receive disco-friendly makeovers that would prompt even the snootiest of music fans to tap their feet. We await chapter two with pleasure. *Jennifer Marston*

**INSIDE SCANDINAVIA 2**

Raw Fusion/SWE/CD

Iconic DJ and well-traveled tastemaker Mad Mats has not only cultivated the Raw Fusion club night (which turns 10 this year), but also an accompanying record label, which showcases underground Nordic talent steeped in the soul-jazz tradition. *Inside Scandinavia 2* continues to explore the fertile musical underground of Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, where neo-soul, hip-hop, and jazz are seen from fresh and compelling perspectives. Jukka Eskola kills it with the uplifting jazz epic "1974" and Copenhagen's Povo makes two appearances, including a swinging Latin jazz touch-up of Fertile Ground's "Another Day." From above-average wonders to high-caliber delights, *Inside Scandinavia 2* is nothing short of exceptional. *Velanche Stewart*

**IT'S IMPORTLAND TO ME TO BE ONE STEP FURTHER THAN ONE STEP BEYOND: HOLOCENE MUSIC REMIX COMPILATION VOLUME 1**

Holocene Music/US/CD

Portland, OR is better known for its indie rock than electronic music, but the Holocene club's record label could help change that. On their first release, Portland bands are remixed by similarly homegrown electronic artists. Some tracks falter, like Kittenz' remix of Blitzen Trapper (with its overloaded kitchen-sink aesthetic), but sometimes the results beautifully meld two different scenes. Dizzy Starhouse's remix of Point Juncture, WA (the band, not the place) nicely juts guitars up against stuttering beats, and E\*Rock's take on 01 (Pop Music)'s "Don't Tell Me" is an infectious piece of electro-pop. *Luciana Lopez*

**THE KAJMERE SOUND VOL. 1**

Kajmere/US/CD

On this up-and-coming LA label's new compilation, you'll discover a little bit of nu-jazz, some hip-hop, an occasional touch of funk, and everything in between. The silky smooth tone remains constant; it's the genre-bending collaborations that are most appealing. Just listen to slick-talking MC N8E's melodious duet with forgotten R&B star Jon B ("Tread Lightly") or Afrosidiac Sound System's modern funk explosion, which features an extra bubbly Raashan Ahmad of Crown City Rockers ("Revolution"). Chances are, you won't dig everything on here, but you will definitely find something up your alley. *Max Herman*

**KIKI: BOOGYBYTES VOL. 01**

Bpitch Control/GER/CD

Axl Jansen's peculiar/ugly sleeve portrait of Joakim ljäs (a.k.a. Kiki) captures the Finnish DJ mid-head-bang, his features unflatteringly frozen. Conversely, the inaugural release for Bpitch Control's new mix series thrives on movement: a sense of forward propulsion, a *rushiness*. Kiki's splicing of tracks from the likes of Fairmont, Ellen Allien, Troy Pierce, and Anja Schneider seems close to unstoppable—when the pace plummets close to the dextrous set's conclusion, it feels like a minor act of sabotage. *David Hemingway*

**THE KINGS OF JAZZ: GILLES PETERSON AND JAZZANOVA**

Rapster-BBE/GER/CD

BBC DJ Gilles Peterson and Berlin nu-jazz radicals Jazzanova need no introduction as worldly tastemakers. Each selected a disc each for this installment of BBE's *Kings Of* series; the result is a 140-minute biography of future jazz. Check Roy Haynes' "Quiet Fire," a simmering, impressionistic, percussive wash; the mallet-painted skylscapes of Two Banks of Four's "Two Miles Before Dawn;" or the insistent hi-hat behind Art Blakey's "Anthenagin," a precursor to today's dancefloor jazz. Jazzanova perhaps concentrates too little on the broken beats they're known for, but as a tribute, lesson, or late-night soundtrack, *Kings of Jazz* is hard to find fault with. *Justin Hopper*

**M.A.N.D.Y.: GET PHYSICAL VOL. 1**

Get Physical/GER/CD

Here's looking at four years of consistently superior music from one of Germany's finest electro-centric imprints; *Get Physical Vol. 1* features several more notches on the label's belt of successes. Pulling from various singles and full-lengths from the last two years, it's an accurate sampling of who's doing what within this electro-house family. Booka Shade provides sharp 4/4 dance numbers, both a contrast and compliment to the more ethereal melodies of Chelonis R. Jones, and keep your ears open for a few surprise numbers from the likes of Jona, Zwicker, and Lopazz. *Jennifer Marston*

**MISS KITTIN: BUGGED OUT**

Resist/US/CD

"While bitches Botox/I blow cocks," opens Princess Superstar on Miss Kittin's latest mix CD. Setting the tone for the rest of the two-disc release—which features Wagon

Christ, Squarepusher, Adam Beyer, and Sixtoo, among others—Kittin (a.k.a. Caroline Herve) spins tracks that are full of bass, rhythm, and attitude. After all, the Berlin-based singer/diva/DJ specializes in toying with electro, techno, and anything else with bump. While some tracks are repetitive, Kittin is clean and consistent with her mixing—which makes the entire listen fun. A solid release. *David Ma*

**MORE PRESSURE VOL. 1... STRAIGHT TO THE HEAD**

Pressure Sounds/UK/CD

Longtime purveyors of classic reggae and dub collections, Pressure Sounds' 50th release focuses not on a particular artist or style but a handful of unknown—and seriously killer—tracks, most followed by equally obscure versions. Many of the 45s featured here have no masters, serving as reminders of a time when dubs were made with little cash and a lot of love. The second 7" outtake from this batch, Bongo Gene Campbell's "Skyjack" and the Bongo Gene All Stars' "Skyjack Version," are reason enough to dig in, as is Uhuru's soul-stirring "Folk Song." *Rachel Shimp*

**NATURE SOUNDS PRESENTS NATURAL SELECTION**

Nature Sounds/US/CD

It looks like '06 is going to be a real breakout year for up-and-coming Brooklyn indie label Nature Sounds: Not only have they scored the next Pete Rock LP, but they also have the MF Doom and Ghostface collabo, *Swift and Changeable*, in the oven. *Natural Selection* provides a first look at these projects (Doom and Ghostface's "Angeles" is solid, yet slightly disappointing) and future releases, like the upcoming debut of L.A. supergroup Strong Arm Steady (whose "Gold Chain Music" appears here). The highlight, however, is "Ringin' Bells" from Masta Killa, who helped put Nature Sounds on the map with 2004's *No Said Date*. *Jesse Serwer*

**OM: MIAMI 2006**

Om/US/CD

Om has earned a rep as one of the most solid house labels out there and this album, showcasing new material for March's Winter Music Conference, only polishes their good name. Standouts include Andy Caldwell's made-for-the-floor "Don't You Love Me?," Colette's hypnotically sexy version of Robert Palmer's "Didn't Mean to Turn You On," and Samantha James' vocal-driven joy, "Rise." Actually, it's hard to find a track here that wouldn't be a star on any number of lesser albums. *Luciana Lopez*

**THE ROUGH GUIDE TO BHANGRA DANCE**

World Music Network/UK/CD

As world music has expanded beyond niche markets to become part of the global pop-culture landscape, its evolution has moved past purist-pleasing traditionalism and embraced a multifaceted, multicultural aesthetic that draws from a melting pot of influences. On *Bhangra Dance*, contemporary Indian pop gets infused with electronic textures, dancehall reggae lickshots, hip-hop attitude, and international club sensibilities (from the likes of Panjabi by Nature, Manak-E, Malkit Singh, Juggy D, and Taz). If you liked Panjabi MC, this comp represents the next wave of Eastern beats. Bhangra is already banging from Mumbai to Miami, so it's not too much of a stretch to call it this year's reggaeton. *Eric K. Arnold*

**SHAPES**

Tru Thoughts/UK/CD

Robert Luis' Brighton-based Tru Thoughts label and club night has scored worldwide love with a wink and a nod. Twisted, whimsical, and humorous, the latest in the attention-grabbing *Shapes* series puts a greater emphasis on both unreleased and previously vinyl-only tracks. Just about the entire TT roster is represented with oodles of killer tracks. Quantic's "An Announcement of Answer" (where funky breaks meets the tango) and Life's scrumptious downbeat treat "Come On" are two heavy bangers on opposite extremes. A tight collection that won't go stale anytime soon. *Velanche*

**THE SOUND DIMENSION: JAMAICA SOUL SHAKE VOL. 1**

Studio One Soul 2

Soul Jazz/UK/CD

A bridge between early reggae and American soul, Jackie Mittoo and his Hammond B3 are again at the center of Soul Jazz's ongoing voyage into the Studio One vaults. *Jamaica Soul Shake*, a collection of instrumentals from Studio One house band The Sound Dimension, features the late keyboardist alongside Cedric Brooks, Ernest Ranglin, and Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace. The quintessential "Ready Rock" is missing, but the oversight is possibly justified by the inclusion of obscure gems like the funky "Federated Backdrop." The second in a series collecting Jamaica-fied versions of soul classics, *Studio One Soul 2* is covered in Mittoo's fingerprints, from the Soul Vendors' "Swing Easy" to his own take on "Jumping Jehosophat." The most striking tune, a cover of The Stylistics' "People Make the World Go Round" by Alton Ellis'

sister, Hortense Ellis, may feature Mittoo as well, although that confirmation appears buried in the label's deep history. *Jesse Serwer*

**TOSCA SOUVENIRS**

G-Stone/AUS/CD

Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber of Tosca offer a collection of remixes from last year's surprisingly lively (for Tosca, at least) album, *J.A.C.* Unlike 2002's irritating *Different Tastes of Honey*, these reworkings actually stand a chance on their own. Not all are groundbreakers—Señor Coconut's blithe cha-cha take on "The Big Sleep" borders on parody—but many breathe life into Tosca's originals in fantastic, unforeseen ways, like Makossa & Megablast's wicked transformation of the lounge-kittenish "Heidi Bruehl" into a synthesized dancefloor growler. Too bad Tosca's only contribution is the title track, comprised of nine seconds of silence. *Anna Balakrishna*

**TRIUMPHANT RHYTHM**

Greensleeves/UK/CD

Produced by Kenmar "DJ Flava" McGregor with *nyabinghi* drums by Bongo Herman, this acoustic-tinged modern roots set is lead by Gyptian's chart-topping maternal ode "Mama," which proves his elastic soprano is capable of more than one major hit. Other surprises come from Perfect, whose "Shoulda Neva" showcases an explosive tonal range, and sweet lovers rock is delivered handily by Ras Shiloh, Thriller U, and Lukie D. *Triumphant* is more for DJs than home listeners—the album drags after six or seven numbers—and for a riddim centered around a song praising mothers, the absence of female contributors is inexplicable. *Tomas Palermo*



THE TAPE

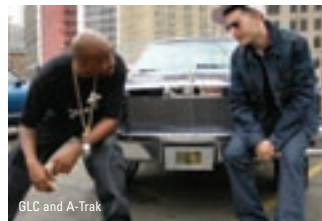
**FUTURISM AIN'T SHIT TO ME 2**

KYO/GER/CD

*Futurism* is apparently on some other shit. Kitty-Yo sublabel KYO collects some old joints and some new in what is one of the better comps of even-further hip-hop in recent times. Slick this ain't. Beats range from traditionally loose and easy offerings like Daedelus' and Dabrye's remix of Bus to a slightly unhinged, bass-and-grime-heavy effort from The Tape vs. Infinite Livez to drunken-sailor-on-a-wet-deck Quasimoto with the awesome "Come on Feet." *Futurism* is hip-hop with a good dose of Berlin-style glitch 'n' glitter in it, with Sole's "On Martyrdom" turning downright electro by the end. Highlights include Forss' "Soulhack" (sounding like the best Chocolate Industries joint they never signed), 8-Bit's "I-Deez" (as in the hook: "Robots don't got no drivers license, so we gotta get fake..."), and the Quas track, because it's as good as everything else he's ever done. The disc's only oversight? A lack of great German MCs. *Matt Earp*



**READ THE LABEL**  
**BY JESSE "OROSCO"**  
**SERWER**  
 HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHITE LABELS, AND SHIT



It's looking more and more like the year of the Wu. Following on the heels of **Ghostface's** *Fish Scale* (Def Jam), **Raekwon's** much-anticipated "sequel" to *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx* is also reportedly ready to roll. While Ghost was once again dogged by his label's poor single choices ("Be Easy" and the crossover-seeking "Back Like That" were far from the best *Fish* had to offer), the Wu Music Group has definitely put Raekwon on the right track with "State of Grace," a RZA banger that perfectly follows last year's mixtape jump-off "Baggage Handlers."

Ghostface tour DJ **J-Love**, meanwhile, has been flooding the market with Wu mixtapes, hooking up with underrated Wu associate **LA The Darkman** on *Return of the Darkman* and spotlighting Raekwon on *Only Built 4 The Streets Vol. 2: Hidden Darts Vol. 3* is the third (duh) in his series of Ghost rarities and it's pure fire. Reaching beyond the lost tracks, freestyles, and cameos found on the previous two installments, J-Love brings some beats of his own (the *Warriors*-inspired "Late Night Arrival" is particularly strong). Less impressive, but also worth copping, is *The Vatican Vol. 1*, another Raekwon jump-off from Miami's Counterflow Recordings.

While we're in New York, Brooklyn MC **Akir's** debut LP, *Legacy* (Viper), is a great straight-up rap record with engaging political lyrics in the Nas/Kwesi vein. Following up last year's "Politricks" single, "Apocalypse" (b/w "Resurrect" and "The Louisiana Purchase") puts his album's best track on a-side blast.

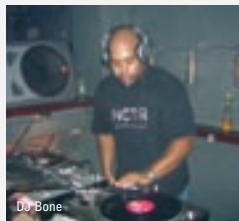
The Detroit MC formerly known as **Lacks** has resurfaced in LA as **Ta'raach**, dropping "Yeah" b/w "Heaven" on Tres Records. Now focusing on beats as well, he's clearly picked up some loopy soul from late mentor J Dilla. Boston's always-consistent Brick Records brings us another fine 12" in **Kaze and 9th Wonder's** "Last Laugh." While he shares billing, 9th only produced the a-side; fellow Justus Leaguer **KhrYSIS** actually steals the show with his beat on "Locked in Chains," while Beat Junkie **Rhettmatic** produced "Blood Thicker Than Oil."

The mere existence of G-Unit DJ **Whoo Kid's** *Bay Bidness: The Mixtape* (a collaboration with Frisco's **DJ E Rock**) is definitely an indication that the rest of the country is starting to get hyped. There are certainly enough MCs with unique, distinctive styles here (**Keak Da Sneak**, **Nump**, and **Droop E**, to name a few) to make anyone forget about **Tony Yayo** and **Lloyd Banks**, so who knows. And the **DJ Shadow** song ("3 Freaks" featuring Keak and **Turf Talk**) is just ridiculous. Meanwhile, Slept On Records heads **Nick Andre** and **E Da Boss** spotlight a different side of Bay Area hip-hop on *The Catalog* (mixed by **DJ Platern**), which is full of hazy funk and off-kilter rhymes from people like **Lateef** and **Bicasso** of the **Living Legends**.

Finally, **GLC** and **A-Trak's** *Drive Slow* mixtape has been out for a minute now but I thought I'd hold it up as an example of the kind of thing we like to see here at Read the Label HQ. Not only do we get acquainted with an up-and-coming MC we only know from Kanye guest appearances, but we also have DJ-of-the-moment A-Trak getting his feet wetter as a producer (on two tracks, at least). If more mixtapes had exclusive tracks as good as GLC's "Haterville" (this one's actually produced by Mano) we might not need albums anymore.



**BUBBLE METROPOLIS**  
**BY ML TRONIK**  
 TECHNO: MINIMAL, BANGING, AND BEYOND



"Are you funky with the machines? Or do the machines make you funky? Who programs who? Do the machines program you?" These questions, posed by Detroit's **DJ Bone**, heat up my mind. His limited-edition 7" release "No More Heroes" (Subject Detroit) is backed with a speech entitled "Music," in which he sends a message to the techno world about the genre's missing soul. **Aaron Carl's** single, "Tears," (Subject Detroit) reinforces the sentiment with his deeply emotive brand of techno; pumping beats and lush synthetic strings abound.

The new **Paul Woolford**, *Erotic Discourse* (20/20 Vision), will have you gesticulating uncontrollably all over your room, your discotheque, you name it. The title cut is a dancefloor filler; a 21st century bleep track with killer instincts. Also taking a page from the future book of beats are **Chris Udoh** and Fade Records. Their latest, "Everyday of the Week," matches tough tech-house rhythms with distorted vocals on a backdrop of bouncy synths. Like a lover with a shocking admission, this record caught me off guard, forced me to pay attention and think about what I was hearing. Good stuff.

**Theodor Zox**. Remember that weird-ass name because this kid is going to be making necks knock for a while to come. He's got two 12"s out right now: the first is his debut 12" on Morris Audio entitled *Crystallized*. If I didn't know better, I'd swear this guy was some West-Coast funky house DJ who got bit by the minimal techno bug and went bananas in the studio. Full of swinging beats, funky hi-hats, techno FX, and pads, "Pixel Fat" is the stand-out on this EP, while his *Extruder* release on *Tic Tac Toe* features "Stalker," a deeply syncopated track with a beat that follows you around the

room. Be real careful with that one, y'all. Minimalists rejoice: Frisbee Tracks will be re-releasing select songs from **Ricardo Villalobos'** back catalog for the first time on CD. Villalobos himself will be remixing some of those classics, including the acclaimed "Que Belle Epoque." The single is backed with what I have always considered one of Villalobos' best cuts, "Lazer@ present."

From lost classics to found sounds, Philly's Foundsound label aims to confuse us all with the three-tracker, "You Am I," by **Fusiphorm**. Sparse, boomy, **Basic Channel**-esque styles are all over this 12", which includes a remix of "I Am You" by **Someone Else**. Disorienting, but fun nonetheless.

We all know that there can never be any real peace without **Justice**. The French duo of the same name probably agrees. Think Tony Lommi partying with Daft Punk. These are massive, diamondiferous, distorted, and heavily arpeggiated electronic-rock riffs from beyond. Check "Let There Be Light" for maximum headbanging.

Go directly to your nearest record shop and seek out two upcoming releases from the Spectral label: **James T. Cotton's** "Oochie Coo" and **2 AM/FM's** "Pt. 2": these 12"s take you deep into the classic acid vibe. The former's "My Zel" is the standout; its playful melodies melt away to reveal a funky 303 machine simmering at 113 beats per minute. The latter's totally weird 13-minute trip, "Acid Planes," saturates minds with scary, manic, vocal samples and buzz-saw acid sounds straight outta '88. Brand new retro-techno pressure.



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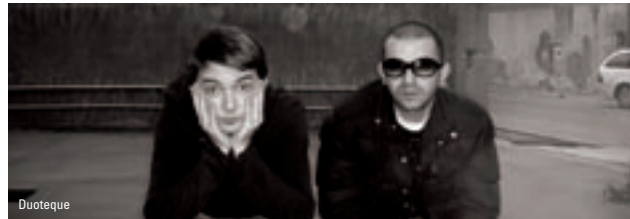
**WARM SPEAKERS**  
BY COLIN NAGY  
HOUSE MUSIC AND ITS EXTENDED VARIATIONS



Hot Chip (photo by Marcus Clackson)



Roman Flügel



Duotique

Though this edition of Warm Speakers just misses the inevitable spring catharsis of promos at Miami's Winter Music Conference, there's still a load of great stuff that's emerged during the thaw. Those lucky enough to grab the early pressings of **Hot Chip's** "Over and Over" (Astralwerks) will no doubt be delighted by the variety of the remixes included. **Justus Kohncke's** playful, disco-inspired mix gets on extremely well with the quirky vocals, while **Solid Groove** steers the original directly toward the dance-floor with those tight drums we've come to expect. Also noteworthy is the **Naum Gabo** mix, the not-so-secret guise of **Optimo's** super-talented **JG Wilkes**, which brings some stomping, sleek electro-house into the fold.

**Everything But the Girl** mastermind **Ben Watt's** Buzzin' Fly imprint is finding widespread DJ support with **Dark Mountain Group's** *Lose Control* EP, which leverages a fairly simple arrangement of sharp drum programming, dirty synth stabs, and ethereal vocals to great effect.

Philly Sound Works releases **Vincent Montana Jr.'s** "The African Track," a hypnotic, percussive piece originally recorded in 1979 to a 24" master; it's just now seeing formal release after being shunned by record companies at the time for being "too far out." Silly A&R guys—that's how we like it! The 12" also includes a few edits and bonus beats.

Mike Shannon's Cynosure imprint sees arguably its finest release to date with **Martin Schopf's** and **Tobias Freund's** collaboration, **Sieg Über Die Sonne**. Both sides of the *Sovjet Supreme* EP are killer, but the house-minded should check the flip for "Regular," a nice minimal groover.

It's been out for a bit, but *Blue Rhodes Dances* (Still Music) by **Rodenion** a.k.a. Tokyo-based Hirofumi Goto) is certainly worth looking into if you missed the initial release. It's got a jazzy, deep-house feel and is getting plenty of play from the likes of Laurent Garnier, Mr. Scruff, and Compost's Michael Reinboth. Fans of Moodymann and Theo Parrish: Don't sleep on this one.

Turntable Lab's dance-music buyer and certified house head, **Alison Tara**, launches her own label, Dirty Trick, with the debut release "Two Girls." The original is a heady, debauched ode to experimentation with a tight, infectious bassline. One of my favorite producers, **Brennan Green**, contributes a stellar remix with slightly smudged, off-kilter snare rudiments and a deceptively simple live tom arrangement that sends the tune further left of center. Awesome.

**Duotique's** *Leaving the Juno Planet* (Boxer) features atmospheric, wobbly, tech-house on the a-side, and manages to sound like a less temperamental cousin of **Argy's** "Love Dose (Luciano remix)." The flip is a scathing electro-house mix that rivals the better output of **Vitalic** for dancefloor impact. One for the head, one for the body—both completely on-point.

After a string of anthems, **Roman Flügel** adopts his **Soylent Green** guise for *La Forza del Destino* (Klang/Ongaku/Playhouse), a full album that channels the Chicago sound. Also keep your ears open for **Booka Shade's** stunning debut LP, *Movement* (Get Physical), and **Crowdpleaser & St. Plomb's** 2006 (Mental Groove), a couple of solid indications that 2006 is the year for top-quality artist full-lengths.



**HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:**  
**CLAUDE VONSTROKE**

Barclay Crenshaw (a.k.a. Claude VonStroke) is at the forefront of tech-house in the US. Thank god, too, since we always have to shop at websites with ".de" or ".se" suffixes to find stuff this hot. That's not to say you can't cop his tracks internationally; his "Deep Throat" single—which boasts a hilarious video that's not for vegetarians or the faint of heart—has found its way onto numerous compilations and European dancefloors, and "Chimps" appeared on a recent Get Physical mix entitled *Full Body Workout Vol. 2*. So what's next for the man behind San Francisco's dirtybird label? An incredible debut full-length, *Beware of the Bird* (out this month), that collects old and new club tracks, clipped-and-blipped house excursions, and classic techno-inspired curiosities. Here's some of his latest turntable faves. *Derek Grey* www.dirtybirdrecords.com

**RIPPERTON PRESENTS RAYON**  
**FOLKS AND FLAKES**  
Cognaisseur/GER/12

I'm a sucker for this sound. "Folks and Flakes" is the kind of minimal even your mom would like. This EP was made for fans of space melodies who want to give the crowd a break from all the big-room bass tracks. Los Hermanos meets Richard D. James in a good mood. *Claude VonStroke*

**TREVOR LOVEYS**  
**LEG WARMER**  
Frontroom/UK/12

The next level of London house music is here to stay. Trevor Loveys gives us weird sounds, unusual breaks, and great sound quality in a tightly wrapped package. "Leg Warmer" is the track that you want to hug, squeeze, and buy a vodka soda. The flip, "Digital Watch," is also nice for the funky house contingent. *Claude VonStroke*

**INDUCEVE**  
**WAREHOUSE SHIT**  
Dubsided/UK/12

This is either going to be the most annoying track of the year or the biggest hit. It sounds like someone took a balloon and rubbed it between their fingers for an hour and then cut all the samples together in a merciless sonic attack. At full volume your head might explode. Amazing and terrifying. *Claude VonStroke*

**GUMMIHZ**  
**ISOLATE**  
Mobilee/GER/12

A single synth patch that sounds like a swarm of bees is about to envelop the listener. This is the track you hear at a warehouse in Detroit when you are losing your mind. Some will throw it into the "too minimal, not fun" pile, but I think it's a 5 a.m. secret weapon. *Claude VonStroke*



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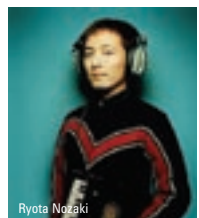
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**BROKEN BUSINESS**  
BY PETER NICHOLSON  
FUTURE JAZZ AND BUSTED BEATS



Go East, young man! That's right, as promised, this month we're off to the Orient to hear some sounds from our pals on the other side of the Pacific.

Who better to start with than our boy **Ryota Nozaki** (better known as **Jazztronik**), future jazz's busiest piano player. Last year he dropped no less than three albums, but the kind sorts at Especial Distribution have gathered the hot joints from the two harder-to-find LPs onto a pair of EPs. First comes the *Cannibal Rock* vinyl, with plenty of Latin heat (I always love joints with **Flora Purim** on vocals—class!) and a slamming cut by the name of "Beeping" which features some bleeping mad drums. Then, *en:Code* has an epic free jazz-styled jam featuring **Rob Gallagher & Valerie Etienne**, but it's the rich and rubbery broken soul of "Working Day" featuring **Sonia Santana** that has my feet shuffling like mad. Rob and Valerie also guest on a housier gem from Especial where **Masa Collective** takes on the Pharoah Sanders classic "Love Is Everywhere," featuring a crisp, crunchy pair of reworks from **Kyoto Jazz Massive**.

You know who really gets around is the Jazzy Sport label's main man **Taro**. My source pinned him down the other day, then hopped on IM and got me sorted with the goods, including a truly stellar **Grooveman Spot** re-rub of Jazztronik's "Prelude" that has a sublime blend of subdued keys and grand piano. Another Jazzy Sport brew bubbling up is the **Mitsu the Beats** remix of "Are You Down" from the wonderfully named producer **Bum on the Carpet**, which rocks just a dash of Rhodes over an MPC-generated beat. Good start-of-the-night tunes on the hip-hop tip.

What else is going on around the globe? Cream of the crop has got to be the *Wanderers Creek* EP from **Art Bleek**, out now on the lovely Loungin Records. Hailing from Paris, **Arthur Ponchon** (a.k.a. Art Bleek) has a truly unique take on broken beat, and he gives an orchestral feel to the grand original version of "Wanderers Creek," which is full of flutes, strings, and drama. On the flip, **Domu** starts off slow before dropping the prime-time pressure while **Maddslinky** doesn't mess around and heads straight for the jugular—check the chopped drums!

Up in Scotland things are getting seriously funky with **The Everything Treatment's** *Sola* (Buff International). **Square One** keeps it swinging with deft syncopation on his version of the title track and the boys get down inna spy-movie style on "The Theme From...?" which features haunting vocals, a tortured trumpet blast, and the hollowest kick drum ever.

Damn! Almost out of time and we haven't dished the dirt on NYC! Have to hit it next time, but we'll give a shout out to "We Can Change This World" (Papa) from Big Apple players **DJ Spinna** and **Heavy** (**Nicky Guiland** and **Casey Benjamin**.) The album has got some wonderful Yoruba Soul mixes from the master **Osunlade**, but it's the originals that have my head spinning—with smooth, quavering synths, a metallic blast of vocoder, and Nicky's sweet voice soaring over a busted beat, it's no wonder this one's getting support from **IG Culture** and—to bring this full circle—the Inspiration crew from Japan.



**DOWNBEAT DIASPORA**  
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WASHINGTON  
GETTING YOU UP ON THE SHARPEST SOUL, FUNK, AND R&B



Welcome to the Stax-O-Wax record shack! We've got the best sock-it-to-me sounds around, sellin' funk to the folks by the pound! Whatever's hot, it's here and it's priced to go! Here's a taste of a few sophomore joints from some familiar faces in the new arrival bin.

On his second outing, *On The Jungle Floor* (Capitol), Dayton native **Van Hunt** unabashedly pimps his unique brand of Ohio-playalistic soul with alternative flair. All non-believers, check the piano ballad "Daredevil, Baby." Also on the second go 'round is West Coast rapper **Declaime**, operating as his blunted alter ego **Dudley Perkins**, on the follow-up Stones Throw full-length, *Expressions*. Warped stoner soul never sounded so good! Pick up his new 12", "Funky Dudley" b/w "Testin' Me," on sale now! Neo-soul flower child **Amel Larrieux** is back one mo' 'gin with the funky single, "Weary," from her second solo offering on Bliss Life Records entitled *Morning*. Stax-O-Wax also takes pride in bringin' you the latest and greatest experiments and mixed bags in our infamous Funk Box bin! The hills are alive with *The Sound Of L.A.!* **Plug Research** offers a taste of the Left Coast subterranean scene in these two EP volumes of bleeps, blips, and astro trips featuring cuts by **Nobody**, **Cut Chemist**, **Georgia Anne Muldrow**, **Sa-Ra Creative Partners**, **Daedelus**, and more!

Hot off the press from the Luv N' Haight Records camp comes a double-sided 7" sampler of searing funk from their second installment in the *Bay Area Funk '70s* reissue compilation series! Side one sports a chunk 'o funk, "Move in the Room," by **Dawn and Sunset**; on the flipside, the pimpalicious strut of "Plenty Action" by **Soft Touch!** And don't sleep on their sister label,

Ubiquity Records, and the next chapter in their *Rewind!* story. *Rewind! 5* is all the way live with remakes of vintage tunes from the likes of Frank Zappa, The Sylvers, Led Zeppelin, and Fleetwood Mac! Check out the 12" sampler from *Rewind! 5* featuring three reworks from **J\*Davey**, **El Michels Affair**, and **Daz-I-Kue**.

We at Stax-O-Wax bid farewell to **J Dilla**, one of the baddest cats around with an MPC. It's safe to say, the game will never be the same. A talent as immense as his will undoubtedly be missed. His posthumous EP release, **Jay Love Japan** (Operation Unknown), is due in very soon. And with guest appearances from **Truth Hurts**, **Exile**, and **Raekwon**, it's bound to sell out as soon as it hits the shelves!

Stax-O-Wax heard the lowdown on two projects simmerin' on the back burner over at **Blue Note Records** with re-twerks by some major players! So folks feenin' for another hit of their vault-diggin' remix magic, hold your joneses steady! Equally anticipated is the arrival of **Georgia Anne Muldrow's** brand spankin' new full-length, *Fragments Of An Earth* (Stones Throw). These joints are bound to sell out as soon as they hit the shelves! So come on down to Stax-O-Wax, where we keep our ears to the street and your feet to the beat!

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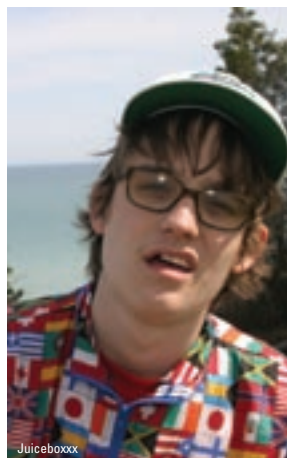
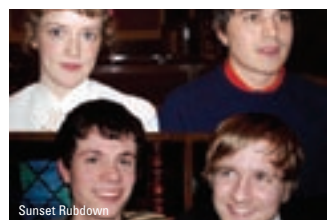
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**AFTER SILENCE**  
BY MARTIN DE LEON II  
THE OUTER ORBITS OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC



Purple sneakers softly striding atop the pavement is how I start these sunny days. With Ketamine raining down on drum machines and rock bands not paying for haircuts, psychedelia has become the pervasive aesthetic running through beats and gee-tars today. I, for one, couldn't be happier.

Montreal's **AIDS Wolf** sounds like headache punk over dissonant melodies and rubble vocals. *The Lovers LP* (Lovepump United) is under half an hour and is chock full of echo-y wails and formless **Arab on Radar**-like punchy guitar work. "We Multiply," for example, is perfect for scribbling academic papers about Load Records.

Pretty, rather than loud, is Australia's **Inch-time**, whose beautiful 7" "Icicles and Snowflakes" (Static Caravan) is full of nervous beats and warm synths. "Almond Eyes," the b-side, boasts sunshine thumps, techno pulses, and whispery percussion: plenty here to get hot to.

Dirty electro is also another good reason to rub up against something and Wisconsin's **Juiceboxxx** has it. *R U There God?? Itz Me Juiceboxxx* (Vicious Pop) is eight tracks of goofy psych rap and gritty beats. Like a white Spankrock, this solo MC's got synthesizers scared—and you should be too.

Denton's **Midlake**, on the other hand, is harmless. They were schooled in Flaming Lips-style indie rock (they even opened up a secret show with the Oklahoma band at SXSW in March) but with their second record, *The Trials of Van Occupanther* (Bella Union), they have grown into their own. "Roscoe" indicates just that: richer melodies, Mercury Rev-style bliss, and a simplicity rarely heard in indie rock.

Even without any records released, two bands that should be bonkers this year are **Boy\$**, a duo from Berlin who makes trashy, unorthodox beats ("Back to the Womb"), and **Fabulous Diamonds**, an Australian dubby rock duo with short songs that aspires to be an indie-rock Augustus Pablo. Keep your eyes and ears peeled.

Robots also have hearts that echo like dub. And New York's **My Robot Friend** is the greatest dance thing to come out of the city since DFA. His *23 Minutes in Brussels EP* (Soma) is magical; post-Devo weirdness ("Dial Zero") and bugged out remixes by Tommie Sunshine make this one of the best EPs this year.

Austin's **Best Fwends** are another 'Princeton dance music' duo that uses microphones like crayons. Their untitled 7" on Moshi Moshi Records is like listening to fuzzy dance punk with cross-eyed samples ("Sk8 or Live"). A full-length record is in the works.

**Titán** is Mexico City's hipster boy wonders. After one record on the famed Grand Royal label and a feature in the great film *Amores Perros* they disappeared. Their new 12" single, "Space Chemo" (Nuevos Ricos), is a weird brew of classic-rock electro and surprisingly, it works. Mulletts not included.

And lastly is one of the best records of the year, *Shut Up I am Dreaming* (Absolutely Kosher), by Wolf Parade's Spencer Krug under the name **Sunset Rubdown**. Taking cues from Xiu Xiu, heart-wrenching songs like "Stadiums and Shrines II" and the lullaby "Us Ones in Between" single-handedly make me care about rock music again. Put down that techno record for a second, I beg you.



**LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS:**  
**MATMOS**

Few artists better define the term "leftfield" than Drew Daniel and Martin Schmidt of Matmos. From crafting an album almost entirely out of operating room found sounds to musically interpreting the Civil War and other moments in American history, the duo (who often moonlights as Björk's backing band) is at the forefront of the experimental dance scene, making music that's as likely to stimulate minds as it is to shake asses. Matmos' fifth album—a collection of tributes in song entitled *The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of a Beast* (Matador)—is all over the map stylistically, dipping into oddball disco to salute Larry Levan ("Steam and Sequins"), distilling and chopping abstract IDM in honor of The Germs' Darby Crash ("Germs Burn"), and orchestrating subdued, cinematic jazz for photographer James Bidgood ("Semen Song"). In between tours with Zeena Parkins and a show at the Whitney Museum of Art, Daniel and Schmidt provide a sampling of what's been rocking their crates. *Ken Taylor* [www.brainwashed.com/matmos](http://www.brainwashed.com/matmos)

**GREG DAVIS**  
**AMARANTHINE (FROM IDOL TRYOUTS VOL. 2 LP)**  
Ghostly/US/3LP

Wobbly told us there's an Indian saying, "Heaven is between two tamburas." This is the kind of music I would make if I could actually play guitar and if I could actually make a good, strong, clean, beautiful recording of anything. *Martin Schmidt*

**POREST**  
**LET'S ROLL (FROM TOURRORISTS LP)**  
Abduction/US/CD

Hijacking a stand-up bass and a shuffling hi-hat groove that's faint kin to The Cure's "Lovecats," this just so happens to be a creepy and hilarious vocal cut-up about 9/11, Osama bin Laden, and the war on terrorism. Put this on and watch people come running up to the DJ booth to demand an explanation. *Drew Daniel*

**STOP DISCO MAFIA**  
**YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW**  
Protronix/US/CD

Berlin freak Ronald Gonko, also a member of Cobra Killer's backing crew, makes sure that the broken electro-pop merry-go-round never gets fixed, but keeps on squiggling and squelching and wriggling and smoking. *Wunderbar! Drew Daniel*

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## BASIC NEEDS BY KID KAMELEON

LOW-END NECESSITIES, FROM RAGGA TO DUBSTEP AND BEYOND



Don Diablo



Ghislain Poirier

When we're talking about the loose confederation of sounds and styles gathered together under the bass banner, innovation often comes from either the close association of a tiny group of artists all sharing similar experiences, or from a large group casting a wide web of ideas. The dubstep forum is lighting up with comments from Lisbon, Zagreb, and State College, PA, but everyone's talking about a few specific events in New York (Dub War) or Brixton (DMZ). Meanwhile the breaks community counts 100-or-1000-times as many members and is supporting events in every corner of the globe. There's good stuff from both ends of the spectrum this month.

Spring and early summer look to be full of heavy releases that fully represent the range of rhythms coming from the dubstep scene. Both DMZ 007 (Digital Mystikz's "Haunted" b/w "Anti War Dub") and 008 (Digital Mystikz's "Ancient Memories" b/w "Ancient Memories (Screamz remix)") are out; in addition, the Mystikz have a double 12" on Soul Jazz, featuring the tracks "Conference," "Misty Winter," "Earth a Run Red," and "Walking with Jah." Meanwhile, **Kode 9** has dropped the fourth Hyperdub 10" (featuring "Backward" and Samurai," with the voice of **iron Spaceape** on mic duty). **Loefah**'s remixes of **Skream**'s "1" and "Monsoon" get a proper release on Tempa along with the second volume of *Skreamizm* (hinting at what's in store for the upcoming full-length Skream album). Then from **DJ Distance** we've got "Traffic" b/w "Cyclops" on Planet Mu as well as a new label he's got in the works. Hot Flush delivers tracks from new artists **Elemental** and **Luke Envoy** as well as a third release from **Scuba**. **Blackdown** has Keysound 002 ready for release; it sounds like reaching into a murky pool and pulling out a sapphire, all deep mystery and far-off cries that include an awesome **Burial** remix of "Crackle Blues."

Turning from the subtle to the not-so-subtle, the breaks genre continues its virtual explosion into a million directions at once with some truly challenging music from across the spectrum. One big piece of news is the release of Touchin' Bass 019, with tracks from **Otto von Schirach** and **Phoenicia**, both new to the label and in tip-top form. Then there's **Don Diablo**'s "Down the Drain" with an **Audio Support Unit** remix on Boombox Records out of the UK that's a not-to-be-missed, infectious stomper.

Berlin's always-excellent and seriously underrated Dangerous Drums label has got **DJ Aziz**'s amen runner "No Competition" out now with **October** on the remix. And even though these have been out for a bit, it's worth tracking down the latest two releases from Canada's Berlin-centric Detroit Underground label (go figure). Their compilation EPs, *Detroit Underground Parts 5* and *6*, make good on the original promise that melding super tricked-out MAX/MSP madness with dance music will work if it's done right.

Finally, several hot EPs out now on the dancehall end of things: sunny but sinewy breaks from Nublu (with **Kudu**, **U-Roy**, and remixes from **Deadbeat** and **Jan Jelinek**, to name a few), and harder, unclassifiable mayhem from the long-awaited second round of Shockout records (**Machine Drum**, **DJ C**, **Ghislain Poirier**, and **ModeSelektor** go head to head with MCs **Johny P**, **Mr. Lee G**, and **Ninjaman**, among others). Next month, bass goes summer!

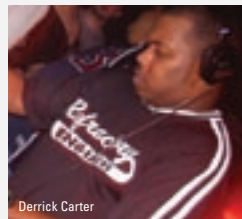


## APOCALYPSE WOW ROY DANK

TRAVERSING TIME AND SPACE IN SEARCH OF ODDBALL DANCE AND POST-PUNK GOODIES



Munk



Derrick Carter



Sonic Youth's *The Whitey Album*

Reissue mania doesn't let up this season. The majors finally caught wind of a bona fide trend and decided to join in the post-everything dance meleé. Warner's Nonesuch imprint does it properly with their re-release of **Brian Eno** and **David Byrne**'s pioneering work, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, including seven previously unreleased songs and a video to boot. The newly unearthed material includes notables such as "Number 8 Mix" and "Defiant," the latter of which comes off like a not-too-distant cousin of "The Jezebel Spirit," arguably the original album's finest moment.

In a bizarre money-losing scheme, entertainment behemoth Universal inked a deal with **Sonic Youth** to reissue much of their early material, including the lost classic, *The Whitey Album*. Recorded under the Ciccone Youth guise, it's not entirely dancey, but it is worth checking if only for their drugged-out Madonna remake entitled "Into the Groove(y)."

Following vaunted releases by the likes of **How and Why?** and **DJ Spun**, the mysterious Editions Disco imprint continues to raise the bar of the current edit frenzy with forthcoming material from New York's **Prince Language** and Mahogany alumnus **Kai Alce**. Spun also contributes an edit of **33 1/3 Queen**'s "Searching" to the latest 12" on his and Ben Cook's **Tu Rong** imprint. With no-holds-barred access to the entire Nu Groove catalogue, Tu Rong releases boast a classic tune from the seminal NYC house and techno label coupled with new remixes and edits. Now you'll have to excuse me while I wipe the drool off of my chin.

German indie stalwart **Compost** continues to expand into the new-disco frontier with

**Eleanor Academia**'s "Adventure," a chart-topping hit from 1988 mixed by none other than Salsoul legend **Shep Pettibone**. Elsewhere in Munich, Gomma chiefs **Munk** tackle **Dubious**' "Midnite Orange" (Truffle) with aplomb. While the Canadian upstart's original is a sublime slice of deep disco, the Munk mix roughens things up for an altogether mutant sound.

Speaking of mutants, the esteemed Belgian imprint Eskimo has reeled in a whole host of 'em onto their ever-growing roster of talent. London's **Pete Herbert** is first up to bat with both his **Reverso 68** project with **Phil Mison** and the unfortunately named **LSB Soundsystem**. The former's "Tokyo Disco" drops any day now, and you can expect a full-length from the duo in 2007. The **Lotterboys**—whose members include **Fetisch** of **Terranova** fame and **Paris the Black Fu** from the **Detroit Grand Pubahs**—round out Eskimo's motley pack with their latest punk-disco single, "IronMan," a twisted affair, to say the very least.

Last but certainly not least, **Âme**, **Dixon**, and **Henrik Schwarz** join forces to release "Where We At" (Innervisions), which is easily one of the most stellar pieces of dance music I've heard in quite some time. And did I mention that **Derrick Carter**'s on vocal duties? Holy shit is right.

### PHASE SELECTOR SOUND

**DISASSEMBLE DUB**  
"They've done a brilliant thing... they've ingested the reggae music they love & responded with a statement that's at once reverential, forward-thinking, and original."  
-NASHVILLE SCENE  
"No matter what your musical tastes, this album will leave you inspired." - JUXTAPOZ

### MIKE LADD PRESENTS

**FATHER DIVINE**  
"Father Divine is his grittiest, rawest, furthest-in-the-red album to date, leaping through dub, punk, electro, and soul, all while still rooted in hip-hop 8.4" - PITCHFORK MEDIA  
"With this sprawling concept album, Ladd has hit a new career high. 4.5 of 5." - URB

### SUICIDE

**HALF ALIVE**  
"Truly The Sound of NYC For Me."  
-LESTER BANGS  
Suicide's Best/Earliest Work.  
75-78 Remastered.  
+ 3 Bonus Tracks.

### DR ISRAEL PRESENTS DREADTONE INTERNATIONAL

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"Dr. Israel returns with a masterpiece. 9/10." - XLREB  
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### NEW FROM ROIR...

#### DUB TRIO - NEW HEAVY

"In all languages this music simply rocks." - THE WIRE (UK)  
"The Sonic Youth of Dub."  
-DUB-O-RAMA  
Featuring MIKE PATTON guest vocals on "Not Alone."  
This is a ROCK record!  
Available May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### ROOTS TONIC MEETS BILL LASWELL - S/T

ROOTS TONIC is hasidic reggae superstar Matisyahu's band.  
"Three of the tightest musicians in the western hemisphere."  
- MEAN STREET  
Available May 9<sup>th</sup>.

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## BROOKLYN

# TARSIER

Alias brings an armload of whirring keyboards, dusky textures, and scruffy bass beats. Tarsier's voice leads the defiantly bright dance through the heavy atmosphere.

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**LUCKY 13**  
**BY TOPH ONE**

TophOne's mix CD *Live Loud & Dirty* is available at [www.fabric8.com/redwine](http://www.fabric8.com/redwine). Hear him every Wednesday at the RedWine Social at Dalva in SF. Learn more about TeamWino at [www.aidslifecycle.org/1888](http://www.aidslifecycle.org/1888).



Let's get this straight: I despise Serato, Final Scratch, iPods, and MP3s, and all that other new-fangled gadgetry that confuses my old-dog mentality. I refuse to learn new tricks. Maybe that'll be my downfall, but so be it. I'm a stubborn Croatian wino; I collect vinyl; and I make my tea in a teapot, never the microwave. I take trains, never fly. I ride the bus to my gigs.

But I digress. I'm in a dark and lonely mood, and an empty mailbox only makes matters worse. Is everyone just making their own remixes and file-sharing them via the magic box? Not much has grabbed my ear yet this year, but I'll hold onto what little faith my recovering-Catholic ass can muster. In the meantime, here are a few of the few. Enjoy...

**1) FRESH AIR SLOWLY COMING ALONG**

(Environmentally Sound/US/12EP) Fresh Air comes once again with another beautifully produced, highly personal release, full of lush instrumentation and heartfelt lyrics. And while this group's records remind one of a smoky jazz den, you really must catch them live to fully appreciate their power as a tight, three-man group in full command of audience and stage.

**2) VOOMVOOM PENG PENG**

(1K7/GER/CD) Electro-disco sexiness abounds without the usual pretension on this brilliant collabo between Peter Kruder and Truby Trio's Christian Prommer and Roland Appel. A little vocoder here, a cinematic intro there; this easily rocks the dancefloor or the dreamy "Highway 1" crate.

**3) J.ROCC "COLD HEAT"/KOUSHIK "COLD BEATS"**

(Now-Again/US/12) These two cats are definitely eating the same forbidden fruit, and don't it taste good! Funked-up, drum-heavy, bass-driven monster mixes from a couple of true Funky Presidents; you can flip between the two or double up for extra fun.

**4) NOMO NEW TONES**

(Ubiquity/US/CD) I'm not sure who got Hugh Masekela, Tortoise, and Liquid Liquid together in an Ann Arbor basement for this all-night party, but I'd like to buy them a pitcher of sangria and shake their hand. "Nu Tones" and "Fourth Ward" will blow you away, while "Sarvodaya" channels Pharoah Sanders—and just might bring tears to your eyes.

**5) PLUS DEVICE BODY HEAT**

(Hefty/US/12EP) Serious electro-funk for the Egyptian Lover/vocoder lover in all of us. Hot.

**6) PROJECT POLAROID PROJECT POLAROID**

(Threshold/US/CD) Kool Keith is in his finest abstract android mode here, but the real star has to be Tom C's dusted, throbbing beats. The S.F. native brings together sci-fi samples with his lo-fi production in a perfect cinematic marriage to Keith's outer-space lyrics. Pals like Prince Po and Motion Man add extra flavor to the journey.

**7) PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS STEPFATHER**

(Basement/US/CD) Probably the most fully-realized release from Thes One and Double K, *Stepfather* shows the PUTS duo growing as artists and maturing as humans, but without ever losing their old-school production tastes and fun-loving vocals. "Flex Off" and "Jamboree Pt. 2" will be some of my summer joints, without a doubt.

**8) ALAIN TOUSSAINT & THE METERS "STUDIO OUTTAKES, 1972"**

(SansuSwampFuzz/US/7) Deep in the bungalows of Pasadena, firmly entrenched behind a wall of large dogs and pre-1958 American

automobiles, my man Orb drinks beer and deals 45s like a damn champ. Where he comes up with this stuff, I'll never know, but if you're lucky enough to catch him at one of his nights at the 'Kitty, you can behold the depths of his collection for yourself. Buy the man a beer and tell him I sent ya.

**9) RONDO BROTHERS TAKE ME BACK**

(Jet Set/JPN/12EP) Mad, island-centric party jams via S.F. Try the uptempo Halfby Mix or the original of "Hey Stewardess" (reviewed in this column about a year ago as an unknown white label).

**10) BLVD EAST & LOUIE "LOU" GORBEA "A JOURNEY INTO"**

(Coco Soul/US/12) Just a beautiful, building, Afro-Latin house jam, perfect for Turntables on the Hudson or a J-Boogie set. Lots of congas and horns and warm vocals throughout invite you to get out there and join the dance.

**11) FOUR ZONE MY TURN**

(Spytech/US/CD) This L.A. cat's been at it for years, coming up with Styles of Beyond and rocking mics at parties around town, and it's killer to hear his debut, with jumping production from the Girlscouts (Vin Scully and Cheapshot). For fans of PUTS or Kirby Dominant.

**12) WALTER MEEGO HOLLYWOOD**

(Bril/US/12EP) Weird electro-pop, but I'm digging it.

**LUCKY 13) SHAKEYFACE FUNK MCS**

(promo/US/CD) My man cooks up some mean funk/hip-hop mash-ups, and check out his debut long-player, *Bicycle Day Boogaloo*.



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IN THE  
STUDIO:  
NICOLAY

The man behind The Foreign Exchange espouses internet-based collaboration and live/sample hybrids.

WORDS: CAMERON MACDONALD

PHOTO: MATHILDE KARRER

The Foreign Exchange's *Connected* was one of 2004's biggest surprises, simply because of how it was produced. The hip-hop record was proof-positive of how far the internet has taken recorded music. Raleigh, NC-based rapper Phonte (of Little Brother) and Dutch DJ/producer Nicolay concocted an entire album without seeing each other in person or even speaking on the telephone. They met through an Okayplayer.com message board and began swapping audio files across the Atlantic via Instant Messenger, eventually piecing together a seamless record. When *XL88R* conversed with Nicolay over IM, he was finishing up his solo full-length *Here* (to feature artists such as Phonte, Black Spade, Jada Avenue, and Darien Brockington), at his home studio in Utrecht, Netherlands.

WHAT'S THE FIRST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IN YOUR STUDIO THAT YOU'D BRAG ABOUT?

My Roland Juno 60 synthesizer. If I am not mistaken, it's from like, '83 or something, but the sound is incredible. No MIDI; it's analog as it can be. Can't go wrong for pads and basses, man. I used that one a lot [on the new record], along with my [Yamaha] Motif 7 for the more "conventional" sounds and I ended up using my MicroKorg here and there.

WHAT'S THE BEST ASPECT OF THE JUNO?

The sound, mainly its loud low [and] high; also, the chorus feature is crazy—it makes me sound [like I have] totally wide stereo. Plus, it has a big-range keyboard. There is a [new] track called "My Story" that actually has a lot of both Juno and MicroKorg on it; the track has a more synthesized background, but has a lot of more organic keyboards like piano, Rhodes, and organ on the front.

HOW DIFFERENT IS THE PRODUCTION ON *HERE* FROM *CONNECTED*, BESIDES NOT EMAILING THE TRACKS BACK AND FORTH?

The new record displays a wider variety of sounds—both my extremes if you will. The first tracks that people got to know from me were boom-bappish, sample-driven hip-hop such as "Light It Up," and when the Foreign Exchange record dropped it was generally perceived as mellow—but I have both sides in me. The new record has a lot of the musical depth that Foreign Exchange had, but it has a lot of what you could call "bangers" as well and I think everything in between; some of it I could even classify as rock.

YOU DEFINITELY HAVE GROUNDING IN MODERN HIP-HOP AND R&B. HOW DID YOU LEARN THE STUDIO PRODUCTION FOR THOSE STYLES?

Honestly, as far as hip-hop and R&B go, I think I have learned to make those genres my own by just doing it. My huge advantage is that I am a classically trained musician. Ironically enough, I studied classical music for about seven years, while I would, at the same

time, eat and drink hip-hop and jazz. In general, knowing how melody and harmony work and knowing how to play instruments will pretty much enable you to pick up any genre.

ON THE NEW RECORD, DID YOU PLAY MOST OF THE MUSIC OR SAMPLE IT?

This time it really is a 50/50 [situation]. I ended up playing a lot more instruments even than on the Foreign Exchange album, but at the same time I sampled more. But even when I sample, I always play instruments on top—like I always play basslines on my bass guitar or the Juno.

IT'S INTERESTING THAT I CAN'T TELL WHAT IS SAMPLED AND WHAT IS NOT.

You can't? That's great. Yeah, that's what I try to do: mask the samples or make it into truly a new product.

BESIDES THE JUNO, WHAT OTHER INSTRUMENTS DO YOU USE?

[Vega] bass guitar and [an Ibanez] electric guitar, I sometimes use an acoustic too. Let's see: turntables and Numark mixer, Yamaha Motif 7, Yamaha DX11, and I used some other stuff here and there that I can't remember.

WHERE DID YOU RECORD THE VOCALISTS?

Parts were done during sessions that we had in NYC. Others were recorded in their respective cities, Foreign Exchange-style. Yesterday, I finished the track that features Darien Brockington after they IM'd us the vocals on Thursday that they recorded on Wednesday. That's how fast the [turnaround] can be sometimes.

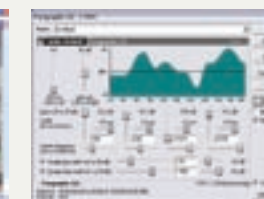
WHAT SOFTWARE DO YOU USE?

I use ModPlug for sequencing and ProTools 6.4 for multi-tracking, recording, and mixing. And I use SoundForge 5.0 for editing.

WHAT EFFECTS DO YOU OFTEN USE?

I think the most used effect has got to be compression. Other than that, I am a big fan of the Frohmagie plug-in. I use reverb here and there, but sparsely. Frohmagie is a plug-in that beefs up your sound using filter banks—it's incredible.

Nicolay's *Here* will be released on BBE later this month. [www.nicolaymusic.com](http://www.nicolaymusic.com)



In Nicolay's studio, (above) Roland Juno-60 and (left to right) Microkorg, Protools 6.4 screen, and Soundforge 5.0 screen



Roman Flügel (left) and Christopher Dell

ARTIST TIPS:

CHRISTOPHER DELL & ROMAN FLÜGEL

Searching for some *real* chin-strokin' electronic sounds? Look no further than the work of Deutshe-funk techno producer Roman Flügel and out-jazz composer Christopher Dell. Despite their austere intellectual approach to collaboration, the duo makes some of the most intriguing, experimental sounds of the last few years on their recent LP, *Superstructure* (Laboratory Instinct). "Roman comes from the electronic field and I come from the jazz/new music field, [but] we never tried to make a mix of genres," says Dell. Instead, they intended to "do research on certain structural problems in music," while using their own specific parameters and sound possibilities to devise some not-so-simple solutions. Heady stuff, no doubt.

But there's a method to their studio madness, and it comes across in every warm vibraphone tinkle and glitchy crackle that bubbles to the surface of their long-form, jazz-heavy recordings. "Researching musical problems is like a game for us; to find the mix between bodily directness and complex abstraction," Dell adds before telling us about the duo's integral studio pieces. *Derek Grey*

[www.laboratoryinstinct.com](http://www.laboratoryinstinct.com)

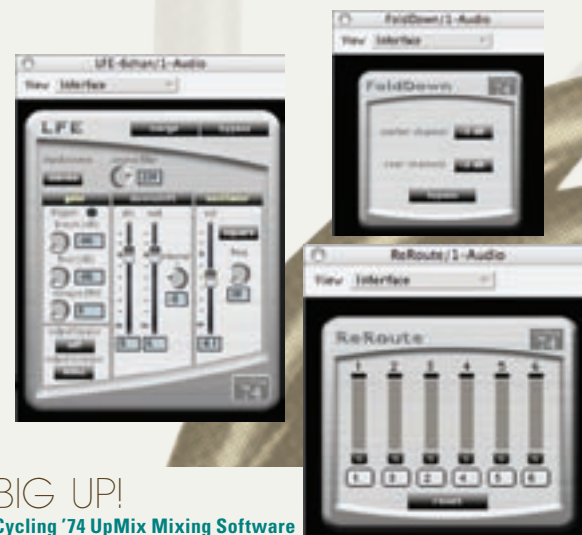
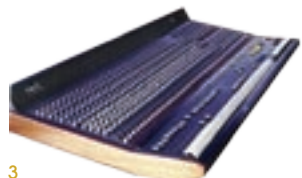
**1. ENSONIQ ASR-10 SAMPLER** "This piece is a unique-sounding sampler that was built in the US until the late '90s. I like the small display that shows almost nothing. It keeps your work very intuitive and spontaneous."

**2. IBANEZ TIME MACHINE ELECTRONIC DELAY/FLANGER** "A guitar FX unit from the '70s, it has a brilliant delay section with a wonderful Jamaican-style dub sound and is making our digital world a lot warmer."

**3. TAC SCORPION MIXING CONSOLE** "It has 32 channels, good EQs, and a brilliant old-fashioned British sound. Early acid house heroes 808 State used the same board on their early productions. I still route all the digital channels from the computer to the analog mixing desk to change the sound a bit."

**4. KEYNOTE DRUMCOMPUTER** "This little green preset drummer from the '60s was used on 'Perspective/Moscow' and 'Dirty Realism.' Obviously, it had to be the Swing pattern. It is one of those machines I found by chance while I was talking to a Frankfurt-based photographer who wanted to sell me his old Korg MS 20. Finally he gave me the Drumcomputer as well—what a brilliant deal!"

**5. SURE SM 58 MICROPHONES** "Cheap and good quality. We used two of them to record the vibraphone—simple as that! We placed the vibraphone in the center of the studio with the computer and synths around us. Programming, mixing, and playing happened in the same room. Even though there was almost no place left to sit, this 'coziness' had an impact on the production."



BIG UP!

Cycling '74 UpMix Mixing Software

MSRP: \$495; [www.cycling74.com](http://www.cycling74.com)

Humans of the future will have six ears. How do we know this? Cycling '74 tells us so. **UpMix**, their latest plug-in masterpiece, is a suite of VTS and RTAS doodads that can take your productions from two-channel stereo Boringland to six-channel surround Funtopia. UpMix's intuitive graphical presentation makes the leap to surround sound easy, while plug-ins like ReRoute and Rotator allow audiophiles and engineers to infinitely tweak their mixes—the resulting sounds are ready for any next-level format, be it audio DVD, film, or videogames. *Rob Geary*

YOU CAN STREAM MUSIC FROM YOUR COMPUTER TO YOUR DOME.



EAR 'DIS

Logitech Wireless Headphones

MSRP: \$129.99; [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

For those looking to beam sound directly into their ear canals, Logitech offers up its **Wireless Headphone** package. Using a Bluetooth adapter with a signal that stretches up to 165 feet (depending on the space), you can stream music from your computer straight to your dome, helped along by standard control functions (play, stop, rewind, fast-forward, volume) on the side of the earpiece. The headphones themselves are solid—not studio quality, certainly, but a notch better than your standard over-the-head jams—and a full charge lasts eight hours. The price is a bit steep, but if you've always wanted to wander around your home listening to music without disturbing the peace, this is your shot. Mac users are out of luck, though—this one's for PC heads only. *Evan Shamoon*

IT'S SO TEMPTING TO ALL-OUT HATE ANYTHING WINDOWS, BEING THAT I'M A MAC-CENTRIC SON OF A BITCH.



HELLO? BILL GATES?

Palm Treo 700w Smartphone

MSRP: \$399; [www.palm.com](http://www.palm.com)

It's so tempting to all-out hate anything Windows, being that I'm a Mac-centric son of a bitch. But Palm's newest phone, the **Treo 700w Smartphone**, is extremely fun to fiddle with, as it combines the Windows Mobile operating system with Verizon's broadband service. The first thing I did was open up [www.xlr8r.com](http://www.xlr8r.com) with Internet Explorer (websites look amazing on the 240x240 screen), quickly snag an MP3 from the downloads section, and turn it into my ringer. You can also make video ringtones for your friends with the built-in camera, edit Word and Excel docs with Office Mobile, or play Solitaire while you're supposed to be finishing that lengthy proposal. Now if only full-blown Windows was so cute and cuddly! *Andrew Smith*



THE BELLS

Xingtone Ringtone Software

MSRP: \$19.95; [www.xingtone.com](http://www.xingtone.com)

Quit downloading lame-ass ringtones from T-Mobile or Sprint. This little app gives you the freedom—both creative and financial—to crank out your own pirated ding-a-lings as often as you like. Simply load up the software and import any audio file from your Mac or PC. Cut, edit, flip, trip, and email the track to your cell number directly from **Xingtone's** easy-to-use interface. Set the preferences for your phone (make sure it's web-enabled first) and download whatever you've got cooking up in Live, ProTools, or iTunes. Can't figure out how to get your opus onto your RAZR? Xingtone's internal support has got you covered, too. An essential app for those always looking for change. *Ken Taylor*



### SYNTH HEAVEN

**Cakewalk Rapture Synthesizer Software**  
**MSRP: \$259.99; www.cakewalk.com**

Just when the electronic music production world seems as flooded with VSTs as dance clubs are with pink shirt-sporting ravers, Cakewalk introduces a hefty plug-in capable of massive sound architecture and minimal texture alike. Compatible with both Windows and Macs, Rapture is one of the most extensively programmable wavetable synths available today. Starting with six different sound-generating oscillators per patch, you can shape the timbre of your sound using the 16 mode filters, with a separate filter for each oscillator. The true magic happens within the 40-plus envelope generators, LFOs, and step generators, making ample room for expansive and complexly modulated patches. Add an inspirational interface with a vibrant MIDI modulation matrix, and it's easy to see why this year's tan is going to be regretfully postponed. *Praxis*

YES, APPLE IS GOOD AT MAKING US WANT STUFF.



### EVERYBODY GET HI-FI!

**Apple iPod Hi-Fi Stereo**

**MSRP: \$349; www.apple.com**

Apple has sold over 40 million iPods, over a billion iTunes songs, and about five zillion people on the idea that Steve Jobs is, in fact, the second coming of Christ. And so it's somewhat unsurprising that the company has finally produced its own iPod speaker set. The **iPod Hi-Fi Stereo** is an all-in-one amplifier/speaker for your iPod, with a universal top-mounting adapter for any model with a dock connector (alternatively, there's a 1/8" port that accepts analog mini-plug or S/PDIF optical digital inputs). Two 80-mm wide-range drivers and a 130-mm woofer inside an acoustically sealed, vibration-free resin chamber make for good listening, and the included Apple remote makes for good sitting. It can run off of six D batteries, and it even charges your Pod while you listen. Yes, Apple is good at making us want stuff. *Evan Shamon*



### LAST NIGHT AN INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE SAVED MY LIFE

**How to DJ: The Insider's Guide to Success on the Decks**  
**MSRP: \$14.95; www.stmartins.com**

Considering DJ culture is well over 30 years old now, it's surprising how closely guarded some of the tricks of the trade are. Tom Frederikse's and Phil Benedictus' book, **How to DJ: The Insider's Guide to Success on the Decks**, is an attempt to expose that secret knowledge, unleashing the techniques behind everything from beat-matching records to navigating the music business. And while there have been some how-to books like this in the past, they've catered specifically to hip-hop, whereas *How to DJ* is decidedly focused on dance music. Interspersed with quotes from pseudo-celebrity insiders like BT, John Digweed, and Mr. C, there is plenty both novice and veteran DJs could stand to learn from this guide. *Brandon Ivers*

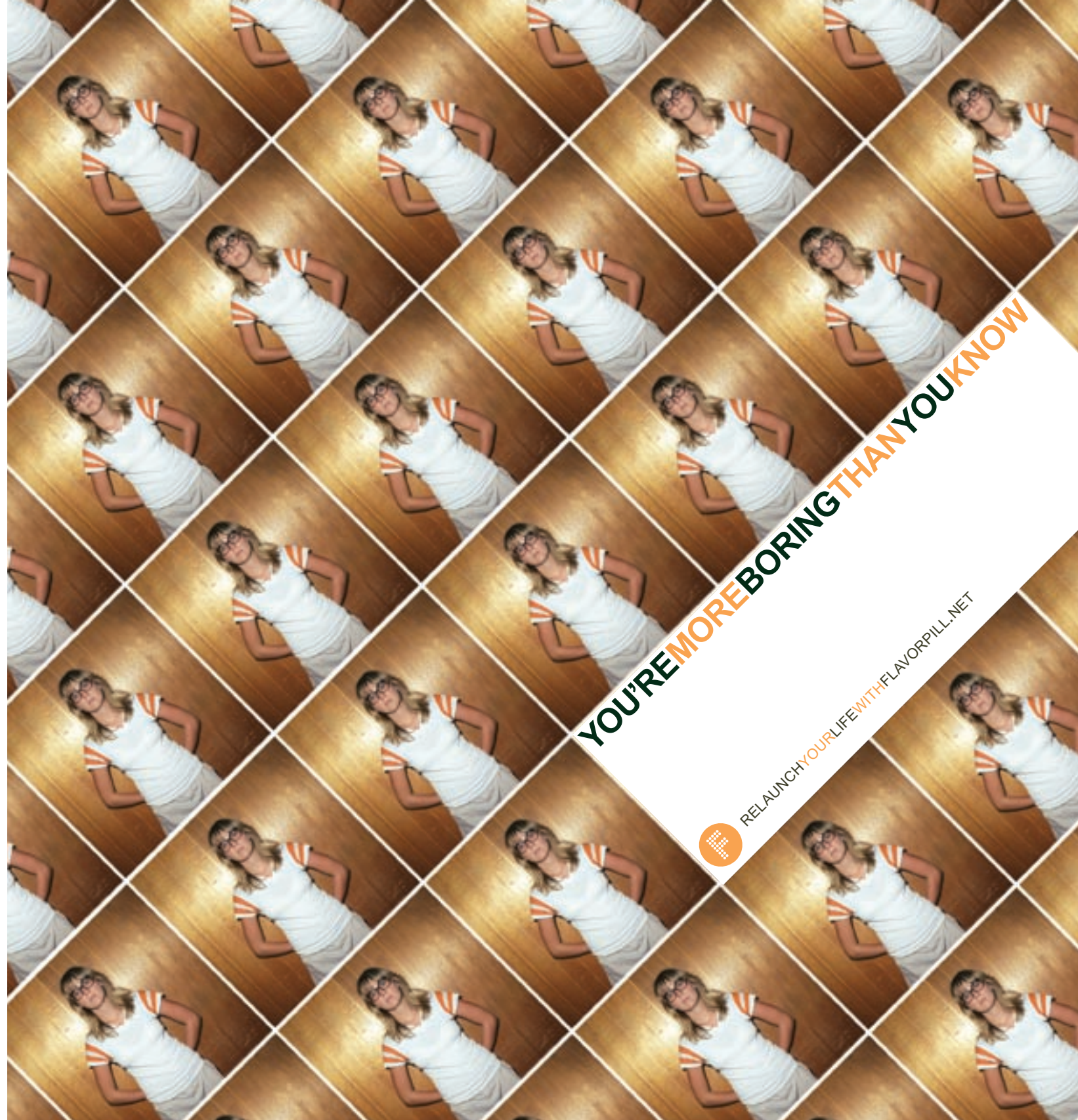


### FRESH AIR

**M-Audio Oxygen 8 v2 MIDI Controller**  
**MSRP: \$179.95; www.m-audio.com**

After about one week with this 25-key MIDI powerhouse, I was amazed with the capabilities of this tiny warrior. Aside from its compact design, the **Oxygen 8 v2** features eight assignable knobs for sampling and 10 memory locations, useful for live performance and recording alike. This user-friendly unit has the potential to make beginners into advanced players and regular MIDI-controller users into seasoned experts with its easy-to-understand functions. Whether you're programming noise samples, mixing and panning volume, or triggering visual effects, the O8 is a killer entry into the MIDI world. *Fred Miketa*

I WAS AMAZED WITH THE CAPABILITIES OF THIS TINY WARRIOR.



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## VIS-ED: DEANNA TEMPLETON

A photographer documents life from the SoCal punk scene to the wild world of pro-skateboarding.

WORDS: JOSIAH HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHS: DEANNA TEMPLETON



It's impossible to discuss Deanna Templeton without mentioning her husband of 15 years, pro skater and Toy Machine founder Ed Templeton. Despite the couple's successful marriage and frequent collaborations, however, her gradual rise to prominence is no mere extension of her husband's notoriety. From her teen years spent in the L.A. punk scene (where she appeared in music videos for the likes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Dokken, and Megadeth) to her thought-provoking photography, Templeton is a poster child of unbridled sincerity. A devout vegan for 15 years, she would rather sip smoothies with Ed at their Huntington Beach home than embrace the party-hard lifestyle commonly associated with pro skateboarding. "We're kind of nerdy," she admits. "We don't go to parties or anything like that."

Templeton became interested in photography in the mid-'80s, when she and a high school friend would sneak into punk shows and take

photos of the bands. In 1998, she began to take the subject more seriously and has since exhibited her work throughout North America and Europe. Recently, she completed a photo project for the 20th anniversary of Sole Technologies (which encompasses the Etnies, ÉS, and Emerica skate brands), as well as the third installment of her *Blue Kitten* zine, a collection of personal photography intended to "share a part of [her] life that makes [her] really happy."

Much of her exhibited work has documented people who flock to professional skateboarders for autographs. Portraying both the excitement and blatant insecurity that unfolds, her work raises serious questions about objectification without dehumanizing her subjects. However, Deanna does not try to make her statements too weighty. Adopting a "shoot first, think later" mentality, she uses her camera as a tool for understanding the culture that surrounds her.

ABOVE:  
Lyon, France 2005  
RIGHT:  
Exclusive photo for  
*XLR8R* Vis-Ed:  
*Fishnet Stockings*,  
Pomona, California  
2005







**When did skateboarding first catch your interest?**

When I was a kid I used to skateboard with my brother—we both had Bonsai boards with urethane wheels. We would just skate around our neighborhood. It was more of a pastime. Then, when I was 18, Ed caught my interest, and he just happened to be a skateboarder.

**What prompted you to start photographing girls at skateboarding events?**

Well, it's not just girls. I photograph guys as well. It's too long of a story of how it first started, but the reason I shoot them is because I'm still exploring the different dynamics that go on with the signings. Like, if a female goes to get an autograph, the places on their bodies are used kind of sexually; [they're] hoping that they might stick out among the rest of the girls.

And then it seems like when a guy gets an autograph, it's just pure messing with the guy. I mean they'll have writing all over their faces, obscenities on their butt. The two are so different. I'm not judging either group; I'm just trying to understand. Especially when you think about [the fact] that most of the markers are Sharpies and they're supposed to be permanent.

**Have you ever felt frustrated by the experiences your husband has had with girls idolizing him?**

Just twice that I can think of. Once, a girl pushed me out of the way to get up next to him. Being young at the time, I pushed her back. Another time, a girl came up to me and asked if it was okay if he signed her boobs. I just looked at her and said, "Sure, and then he could fuck you in the bushes later!" I guess I should be happy that she was considerate enough to ask.

**How did these experiences change the way you view skateboarding?**

It really hasn't changed my view at all on skateboarding. I mean, this is the least crazy thing that could happen in skateboarding. In France, I witnessed a young girl come up to a pro skater that Ed and I were talking to and offer him a blow job for his shoes, so writing your name on a training bra or some cleavage seems pretty mild. I do have to say, though, I've been traveling to Europe now for the last 15 years and I'm not sure if I've seen any kid really get their bodies signed, or in Japan for that matter.

**Skate culture is deeply immersed in consumerism and advertising. Would you have any problems with using your work with an ad campaign?**

Not if it was something I felt really passionate about.

Like if Planned Parenthood wanted to use a photo, then I'd probably be okay [with it], or if some non-violent animal rights group wanted to use a photo. I'm not sure if my photos have mass-consumer appeal.

**What other photographers or artists do you see dominating in their field right now?**

Ashley Macomber! Lauren Greenfield! I get a lot of people who email from my *Blue Kitten* booklets and they usually include their websites, which all have been amazing.

**What equipment do you use?**

My favorite camera is my Mamiya 6, then my Leica M6 (it's taken me a while to acquire this one, but I sold quite a few photos to a museum, which enabled me to afford one finally). Then I have a Mamiya 7, a Fujifilm 6x4.5, an Olympus XA, an Olympus Pen half-frame, and a Contax T3. And I still have

the Yashica T4 and Canon AE-1 that my mom and husband gave to me. As for developing, I have A & I [Color Lab] in L.A. develop all my film. I had a terrible accident when I was learning how to develop film; I messed up the chemicals when I was developing a roll of film that I shot of a friend of mine that [had] just passed away. I've never trusted myself after that. I usually print all my own photos at home in our darkroom.

**Do you think photography has the power to change society?**

Yes. Just look at war photography! Look at any photojournalist. And if no one's changing from that, then there's always fashion photography. It has (and probably will for a long time) been dictating what women change to look like.

**What does the future hold for you?**

Hopefully to keep on breathing, learning, sharing, and caring.

**TOP ROW:**  
*Hang Loose*, Spokane, Washington 2005  
*Ports of Call*, San Pedro, California 2005  
*Johmy and Andy*, Costa Mesa, California 2003  
*Tragedy*, Louisville, Kentucky 2004

**BOTTOM ROW:**  
*Etnies Girls*, Huntington Beach, California 2005  
*Evil Cunt*, Riverside, California 2005  
*Jacob Owns This*, Pomona, California 2005  
 Riverside, California 2005





# ELECTRONIC QUEER

Public Record acts up with *A Silence Broken*.

Words Ken Taylor

In 1994, LA-based artists Dont Rhine and Marco Larsen formed Ultra-red, a collective of musicians and activists that defined the culture-jamming ideals that made mags like *Adbusters* and artist Shepard Fairey so popular. Since then, Ultra-red has grown to include numerous artists and community organizers from a variety of political struggles. With the help of Eddie Peel and abstract house producer Terre Thaemlitz, Rhine also manages the group's online archive/digital label, Public Record, which recently released for one of queer culture's most forward-thinking pieces of audio art, *A Silence Broken*. After Rhine attended a conference on psychoanalysis and politics with Matmos/Soft Pink Truth producer Drew Daniel—and witnessed the academics' refusal to accept queer theory as

a legitimate political discourse—the two asked a few friends to create music with source material from a queer protest in LA in 2000. Available for free download, *A Silence Broken* includes artists like Soft Pink Truth, Lesbians on Ecstasy, and Miau Miau TM providing differing, often danceable, takes on the LGBT war cry “Silence Equals Death”—a call to action to fight the AIDS epidemic and build acceptance and awareness of the LGBT community. Below, Rhine fields a few of our questions about the project.

**What do you want people to do with this record?**

Radical, ecstatic, critical bodily engagement. Our struggles begin on the surface of the skin. Spare us the old clichés about “intelligent dance

music.” *A Silence Broken* sees body music as a site for critical engagement... Just because many of us no longer feel like we're living in an AIDS crisis, does that mean the crisis does not exist? Is ignorance the solution to crisis? Is silence the absence of crisis? Then one day we wake up and we're told we've been infected with HIV, one day we're told there's no such thing as anonymous HIV testing, that our names are reported to the federal government, that there's a cap on free access to AIDS drugs, that there'll be no cure because the epidemic is too profitable, that abstinence is the only AIDS prevention the government will fund, that the majority of federal AIDS dollars are going to Christian fundamentalists, that AIDS is God's punishment. And we wonder where the crisis came from.

**How does electronic music convey political messages?**

Political messages are not the point. I, personally, have little interest in communicating a political point in a piece of music. Rather, I am more interested in how music already activates us socially, sexually, intellectually, aesthetically. I see all these modes of being—structures of feeling, if you will—as having political currency. It is not the case that our politics merely reproduce our modes of being. Rather, it is through these that the conditions for our politics are reproduced. If our art insists on the disavowal of politics, then we get the politics that that disavowal makes possible. Today, that politics is fascism.

**How did you go about choosing the participating artists?**

These are people who are all struggling with their relationship to the history of struggle. We are colleagues in the politics of pleasure and the aesthetics of politics.

**Is *A Silence Broken* also available for purchase, to support the cause financially?**

Buying a record is no substitution for direct action. If people want to support the cause, then take collective direct action to end the AIDS crisis: using whatever dance music kicks your ass, throw your body into the machinery. Begin with wherever you're at—depression, cynicism, anxiety, or anger—and turn that into a weapon, underneath the dancefloor, [on] the battlefield.

*A Silence Broken* is available for free download at [www.publicrec.org](http://www.publicrec.org).

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